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THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA



**OXFORD: HORACE HART
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THE
TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

RENDERED INTO ENGLISH VERSE

BY

ELLA ISABEL HARRIS, PH.D. (YALE)

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TO PROFESSOR
ALBERT STANBURROUGH COOK

WITH GRATEFUL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF WHAT IT OWES TO
HIS CRITICAL SCHOLARSHIP AND LITERARY INSIGHT,
THIS TRANSLATION IS DEDICATED BY

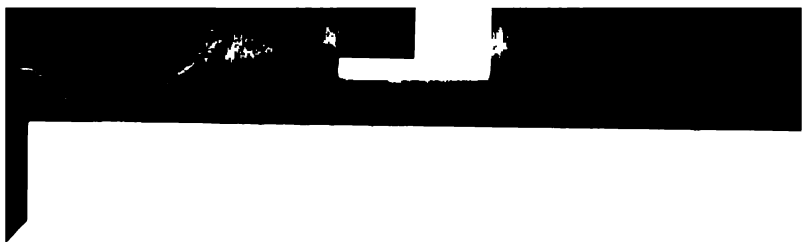
THE TRANSLATOR



PREFACE

THE student of the English drama finds constant allusion to the influence of Seneca upon the development of English tragedy, but he seldom has such command of Latin as will enable him freely to study Seneca in the original; and should he seek a first-hand knowledge of the Senecan plays and of the nature of their influence, a difficulty is at once presented by the fact that for many years there has been no English translation available, the old translations of 1581 and 1702 having been long out of print. It was my own sense of the need of a sufficiently literal and otherwise adequate translation of the Roman tragedies, while I was engaged in the study and teaching of the later drama, that occasioned the present translation.

In undertaking the work, I was at once met by the question of form. Should the translation be in prose or verse? If in verse, should any attempt be made to render the lyric measures of the choruses? The first question was easily answered, since blank verse has long been accepted as a fairly adequate rendering of the rhythm found in the dramatic portions of the tragedies, and has besides the advantage of being the poetic form most acceptable to English ears for










THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA





MAD HERCULES



DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

HERCULES.

AMPHITRYON.

LYCUS.

THESEUS.

JUNO.

MEGARA.

THE CHILDREN OF HERCULES.

CHORUS OF THEBANS.

SCENE: *Thebes.*

MAD HERCULES

ACT I

SCENE I

Juno, alone.

THE Thunderer's sister, for that name alone
Is left me, widowed, I am driven forth
From heaven's heights and ever-faithless Jove ;
Forced from the sky, have giv'n to concubines
My place, must dwell on earth while they hold heaven.
High in the zenith of the icy north 6
The star Arcturus guides the Argive fleet ;
There where the day grows long with early spring,
The bull that bore away the Tyrian maid
Shines o'er the waves ; there the Atlantides, 10
Aimlessly roaming, feared by ships at sea,
Rise, and Orion, threatening with his sword,
Affrights the gods ; there golden Perseus gleams ;
There shines the constellation of the twins,
The bright Tyndaridæ,—for birth of these 15
The floating land stood still. And not alone
Do Bacchus and his mother dwell with gods :
Lest any place be free from infamy,
The sky must wear the Gnosian maiden's crown.
But these are ancient griefs that we lament ; 20
How often has the *single land* of Thebes,

Harsh and detested, full of impious ones,
 Made me a stepdame! Jupiter permits
 Victorious Alcmena to ascend
 The skies and hold my place; the promised star 25
 May be the habitation of her son,—
 The world at his creation lost a day,
 And Phœbus, bidden hold his light concealed
 In ocean, slowly lit the western sky.
 My hatred will not lightly die away, 30
 Enduring anger stirs my wrathful soul;
 Anger shall banish peace, my bitter rage
 Shall wage eternal war. What war remains?
 All fearful things the hostile earth brings forth,
 Whatever dreadful, savage, harsh, or wild, 35
 Or pestilential thing the sea or air
 Creates, has been subdued and overthrown;
 He conquers, waxes strong through ills, enjoys
 Our anger, into glory turns our hate,
 And I, in setting all too heavy tasks, 40
 Increase his glory, prove him son of Jove.
 Where with near torch the sun at rise and set
 Touches at east and west the Ethiop's land,
 Fame of his valor spreads, and all the world
 Proclaim him god; already monsters fail. 45
 A lighter task it is for Hercules
 To do my bidding than for me to bid,—
 With joy he undertakes to do my will.
 What harsh or tyrannous decree can harm
 This dauntless youth? The things he feared and slew
 He bears as weapons, panoplied he comes 51
 With hydra's spoil and lion's. Lands enough
 Do not lie open, he has burst apart
 Th' infernal monarch's portals, brought to light

sc. 1]

MAD HERCULES

5

The wealth of Hades' conquered king ; I saw, 55
Myself I saw him at his father's feet
Lay down the spoils he snatched from night, and death,
And vanquished Dis. Why leads he not in chains
Him who by lot was equal made with Jove?
Why rules he not in conquered Erebus? 60
Why lays he not the Stygian kingdom bare?
'Tis not enough that he returns again,
The federation of the world of shades
Is broken, from the lowest depths a path
Leads upward for return, the secret ways 65
Of cruel death are opened. Ah! and he,
Bold since he burst the prison of the shades,
Now triumphs over me and proudly leads
Through Argive towns the fierce black dog of hell.
I've seen the day at sight of Cerberus 70
Fail and the sun grow fearful, terror woke
In me as well, I saw the threefold head
Of Pluto's vanquished monster, and I feared
Because I had commanded. But too long
I linger, grieving over petty ills ; 75
I needs must fear for heav'n, lest he who took
Hell captive should be master of the skies,
And snatch the scepter from his father's hand.
He seeks no quiet pathway to the stars,
As Bacchus did, through ruin he would make 80
His way, would govern in an empty world.
Tried strength he boasts, by bearing up the sky
Learned that he might have gained it by his might :
Upon his head he bore the world nor bent
Beneath the burden of its mighty mass ; 85
Lightly upon the neck of Hercules
The vault of heaven rested, on his back

He bore th' unshaken stars, the sky, yea, bore
 My weight down-pressing. To the realms above
 He seeks a path. Up vengeance, up and strike— 90
 Strike him who meditates such wondrous deeds ;
 Join battle with him, with thine own hand strive,
 Why delegate thy wrath? Wild beasts may go,
 Eurystheus, wearied, cease to give new toils.
 Let loose the Titans who dared storm Jove's realm, 95
 Lay wide the hollow peak of Sicily,
 Let Doria, trembling underneath the blows,
 Set free the buried monster—but him too
 Alcides conquered ; dost thou seek to find
 Alcides' peer? There is none but himself. 100
 Alcides now must war against himself.
 From lowest depths of Tartarus called forth,
 Come, Furies, from your flaming locks spread fire,
 And wield with cruel hand your serpent scourge.
 Go, proud one, seek thyself a seat in heaven 105
 And scorn thy human lot. Dost thou believe
 The gloomy shades and Styx are left behind?
 Here will I show thee hell ; will call again
 Discord from where she lies in deepest gloom,
 Beyond the place of exile of the damned, 110
 Imprisoned in a mighty mountain cave ;
 Will drag from lowest depths of Pluto's realm
 Whatever there is left ; come, loathsome crime,
 Impiety that drinks the blood of kin,
 Fierce frenzy, fury armed against itself— 115
 Here, here, I find my ministers of wrath.
 Come then, ye nimble servitors of Dis,
 Wave high your glowing torch ; Megæra, lead
 Thy serpent-crowned and dreadful company ;
 Snatch from the funeral pyre with baleful hand 120

A huge and glowing brand ; haste, seek revenge
 For violated Styx ; inflame his heart ;
 Impair his mind ; so, fiercer than the fires
 Of Ætna's forge he'll rage. But thus to move
 Alcides, stung with bitter rage and crazed, 125
 First, Juno, thou must be thyself insane.
 Why rav'st thou not ? Me first, me first o'erwhelm,
 Ye sisters, overthrow my reason first,
 That something worthy of a stepdame's wrath
 I may at last attempt. My mind is changed, 130
 With strength unbroken let him come again,
 I pray, and see again, unharmed, his sons.
 The day is come in which the hated strength
 Of Hercules shall even make me glad.
 Me he o'ercame, himself he shall o'ercome ; 135
 Returned from hell shall long again for death.
 I glory now that he is son of Jove ;
 I will assist him, that with steady aim
 His shafts may fly ; my hand shall hold the bow,
 Myself will guide the weapons of his rage, 140
 And Hercules, when going forth to war,
 Shall have at length my aid ; the crime complete,
 Then let his father to the skies admit
 Those blood-stained hands. The war must be begun,
 Day dawns and from his golden resting-place 145
 Bright Titan comes.

SCENE II

Chorus of Thebans.

The stars are shining only here and there
 In heaven, their light is pale ; the conquered night
 Collects at day's return her wandering fires,

Their shining ranks are closed by Lucifer ; 150
 The icy constellation of the north,
 The Wagoner calls back the light of day ;
 Already leading forth his azure steeds,
 From Cæta's summit Titan looks abroad ;
 Already dewy morning stains with red 155
 The brake that Theban mænads gave to fame,
 And Phœbus' sister flies—but to return.
 Hard toil arises bringing back all cares
 And opening every door.
 The shepherd, having sent his herd afield, 160
 Gathers the grass still sparkling with the rime ;
 The hornless bullock sports at liberty
 About the open meadows, while the dams
 Refill their empty udders ; aimlessly
 In the soft herbage roams the wanton kid ; 165
 The Thracian Philomela sits and sings
 On topmost bough, exults to spread her wings
 In the new sun, near to her querulous nest ;
 The general chorus of the happy birds
 With mingled voices greets the day's return. 170
 When by the breeze the loosened sails are filled,
 The sailor trusts his vessel to the winds,
 Uncertain of his life. The fisher leans
 Above the broken cliff and baits his hook,
 Or waits with ready hand to seize the prey— 175
 He feels the trembling fish upon his line.
 Such tranquil peace is theirs who stainless live
 Content at home with little. Boundless hopes
 Wander through cities, and unmeasured fears.
 At the proud portals, the stern gates of kings, 180
 One sleepless waits ; one, covetous of gold,
 And poor amid his hoarded wealth, collects

Unending riches ; popular applause,
 The common voice more fickle than the waves,
 Makes one man proud, puffed up with empty air ; 185
 Another, basely making merchandise
 Of brawling quarrels in the noisy courts,
 Sells wrath and empty words for gold. Few know
 Repose untroubled ; mindful of swift time,
 Few use the years that never will return. 190
 While fate permits, live happy ; life's swift course
 Is quickly run, and by the winged hours
 The circle of the flying years is turned ;
 The cruel sisters ply their wheel, nor turn
 Backward their thread ; uncertain of their lot, 195
 The race of men are borne by rapid fates
 To meet their death, and of their own will seek
 The Stygian waves. Alcides, strong of heart,
 Too soon thou soughtest out the mournful shade—
 The Parcæ come at the appointed hour, 200
 And none may linger when their voice commands,
 None stay the fatal day ; the urn receives
 The fleeting generations. Fair renown
 May bear one's name through many distant lands,
 And garrulous rumor praise him, to the skies 205
 Advance his glory ; in his lofty car
 Another rides ; me let my native land
 Conceal within a safe and unknown home.
 He who loves quiet lives to gray old age ;
 The lowly fortunes of a humble hearth, 210
 Although obscure, are certain. From the heights
 He falls who boasts a bolder heart. But see,
 Sad, with loose hair, leading her little ones,
 Comes Megara ; advancing slow with age,
 Alcides' father follows. 215

ACT II

SCENE I

Amphitryon, Megara, The Children.

Amphitryon. Great ruler of Olympus, Judge of earth,

Put to my heavy grief and misery
At length an end. For me untroubled light
Has never shined, one sorrow's end but marks
A step to future ills, straightway new foes 220
Are ready to be met. But late returned,
His happy home just reached, another foe
Must be subdued ; he finds no quiet hour,
None free from toil save while he waits the word.
Unfriendly Juno, even from the first, 225
Pursued him ; was his infancy exempt ?
He conquered monsters ere he knew their name ;
Twin serpents lifted up their crested heads—
The infant crept to meet them, with calm glance
And gentle, gazed upon their fiery eyes ; 230
With face serene he grasped their twisted folds
And crushed with tender hand the swelling throats,
And so essayed the Hydra. In the chase
He took the swift wild beast of Mænalus,
Whose head was beautiful with branching gold ; 235
The lion, terror of Nemea, groaned,
Crushed by the sinewy hand of Hercules ;
The ghastly stables of the Thracian steeds—

Shall I recall them? Or the king who gave
 Food to those horses? Or shall I recall 240
 The wild Arcadian boar who from the heights
 Of wooded Erymanthus caused the groves
 Of Arcady to tremble? Or the bull,
 The terror of a hundred Cretan towns?
 Among the far Hesperian herds he slew 245
 Tartessus' three-formed king and drove away
 His booty from the farthest west—the slopes
 Of Mount Cithæron, pasture now those flocks.
 When told to seek the land of summer suns
 And torrid days, the sun-scorched realm, he rent 250
 The hills apart; that barrier broken through,
 He made a pathway for the raging seas.
 Then the rich groves of the Hesperides
 He rifled, from the sleepless dragon bore
 The golden spoil; then Lerna's snake o'ercame 255
 And forced it learn by fire the way to die.
 The foul Stympthalian birds whose outspread wings
 Obscured the sky, he sought among the clouds.
 He was not conquered by the maiden queen
 Who near Thermodon rules the virgin troops. 260
 His hand, for every noble work prepared,
 Shunned not the loathsome task of making clean
 The stables of Augeas.—What avail
 These labors? He is absent from a world
 His hand preserved. The lands that claim him feel 265
 The author of their peace is far away.
 Crime, prosperous and happy, now is called
 Virtue, the good must pay obedience
 To evil doers, might makes right, and fear
 Is stronger than the law. These eyes have seen 270
 Children, avengers of their father's realm,

Slain by a savage hand, the king himself,
 Last son of Cadmus' noble house, I saw
 Slain, and the crown that decked his royal head
 Torn from him. Who has tears enough for Thebes? 275
 Land that abounds in gods, what master now
 Is it that makes thee fear? This gracious land,
 Out of the fertile bosom of whose fields
 The new-born soldiery with drawn swords sprang,
 Whose walls Jove's son, Amphion, built,—he brought
 The stones together by his tuneful songs; 281
 Into whose city from the heavens came,
 Not once alone, the father of the gods;
 Which has received and borne, and may again
 (May it not be unlawful so to speak) 285
 Bear gods; this land beneath the shameful yoke
 Of tyrants now is bent. O Cadmus' race,
 Ophion's hapless seed, how fall'n ye are.
 Ye fear a craven exile, one who comes,
 Shorn of his land, and yet a scourge to ours; 290
 And he who followed up the criminal
 By land and sea, whose arm was strong to break
 The cruel scepter's might, is now afar
 In servitude and bears himself the yoke,
 While Thebes, the land of Hercules, is ruled 295
 By exiled Lycus. But not long he rules,
 Alcides will return and find revenge;
 Will suddenly arise to upper day;
 Will find or make a path. Return, I pray,
 Unharm'd, a conqueror to thy native Thebes. 300
Megara: Come forth, my husband, banish with thy
 hand
 The scattered darkness. If no homeward way
 Remains and if for thee the road is closed,

Yet break through earth and come, and with thee bring
 Whate'er black night keeps hid. As thou hast stood
 And through the sundered mountains made a way 306
 For ocean's flood, when thy resistless might
 Laid open riven Tempe—here and there
 The mountain parted yielding to thy breast,
 And through its broken banks Thessalia's stream 310
 Rushed onward in new channels—seeking thus
 Thy parents, children, fatherland, break forth
 And with thee bring the buried past; restore
 Whatever eager time has borne away
 In the swift passage of the many years. 315
 Drive forth the people who, forgetting all,
 Now fear the light; unworthy spoils are thine,
 If nought but what was ordered thou shouldst bring.
 Too long I chatter, knowing not our fate.
 When comes the day that I may once again 320
 Embrace thee, clasp thy hand, nor make complaint
 Of thy forgetfulness and slow return?
 O ruler of the gods, to thee shall fall
 A hundred untamed bulls; to thee be paid,
 Grain-giver, secret rites, to thee shall wave 325
 The torches in Eleusis' silent groves;
 Then shall I deem my brother lives again,
 My father flourishes and holds his throne.
 If thou art stayed by greater strength than thine,
 Thee would we follow. Save by thy return 330
 Or drag us with thee—thou wilt drag us down,
 Nor any god lift up the weak again.

Amphitryon. O sharer of our blood, with constancy
 Keeping thy faith to great-souled Hercules,
 Guarding his sons, take courage, have good hope! 335
 He will return, and greater than before

As hitherto he came from easy tasks.

Megara. The things the wretched wish too eagerly,
They willingly believe.

Amphitryon. More oft they deem
That trouble endless which too much they fear, 340
And he who fears looks ever for the worst.

Megara. Buried, submerged, beneath the world
shut in,
What pathway has he to the upper day?

Amphitryon. The same he had when through the
arid plain,

The sands uncertain, and the stormy sea, 345
And gulfs that twice withdrew and twice returned,
He found a way when, taken unawares,
He ran aground on Syrtes' shoals and left
His stranded ships and crossed the sea on foot.

Megara. Unequal fortune rarely spares great worth;
None can with safety long expose himself 351
To frequent dangers; he who oft escapes
At last must meet misfortune. But behold,
Harsh Lycus comes, with threatening face, and mien
Like to his spirit; in his alien hand 355
He holds the scepter which that hand usurped.

SCENE II

*Amphitryon, Lycus and his Followers, Megara,
The Children.*

Lycus. As king, I hold the rich domain of Thebes,
All lands the deep-soiled Phocian stretches bound,
All that Ismenus waters, and whate'er
Cithæron from her lofty summit sees. 360

Not by the land's old laws do I possess
 My home, an idle heir ; no noble blood
 Nor far-famed race of royal name is mine,
 But splendid valor. He who boasts his race
 Boasts glory not his own. Yet who usurps 365
 A scepter holds it in a trembling hand ;
 Safety is in the sword alone, it guards
 That which is thine against the people's will.
 A ruler who is king in alien lands
 Scarce finds his throne secure. One thing there is 370
 Can make our rule enduring: marriage made
 With royal Megara, our newer line
 May take its color from her royal race.
 Nor do I deem that she will scorn our suit,
 Yet should she, powerless yet firm, refuse, 375
 The house of Hercules shall be destroyed.
 What though the deed cause hatred and reproach
 Among the people? He who rules needs first
 The strength to bear a people's hate unmoved.
 Chance gives the opportunity, make trial ! 380
 For see she stands, in mourning garments veiled,
 Beside the altars of the guardian gods,
 While near her Hercules' true father waits.

Megara. [*Aside.*] Scourge and destroyer of our
 royal race,

What unknown evil dost thou now prepare? 385

Lycus. O thou who bearest an illustrious name,
 Kingly of lineage, for a moment hear
 With patient kindness my words. If hate
 Must live eternal in the human heart,
 If anger once conceived ne'er leaves the breast, 390
 If happy and unhappy must alike
 Bear arms, eternal wars would ruin all ;

The devastated fields would lie untilled ;
 And homes be burned, and nations find a grave
 Beneath the ashes. 'Tis expedient 395
 For conquerors to wish for peace restored,
 'Tis needful for the conquered:—share our realm,
 Accept my hand. With sternly fixed regard,
 Why silent stand?

Megara. And shall I touch the hand
 My parents' blood has stained, the hand that slew 400
 My brothers? Sooner will the sun go down
 Behind the eastern sky, or rise again
 From out the west, and sooner snow and fire
 Make peaceful compact ; sooner Scylla join
 Sicilia and Ausonia ; sooner far 405
 Euripus with its swiftly changing tides
 Shall wash with listless waves Eubœa's shores.
 'Tis thou hast taken from me father, realm,
 My brothers, home, and country ; what remains?
 One thing remains more dear than home or realm, 410
 Father or brothers—'tis my hate of thee.
 It grieves me that I share it with the land,
 Measured by hers, how small a thing is mine.
 Rule arrogantly, govern with proud heart,
 Th' avenging god pursues the proud man's steps. 415
 I know the Theban realm, what need to speak
 Of mothers who have dared and suffered crimes ;
 Of double guilt, of him who mingled names
 Of husband, son and father? Or to name
 The brothers' hostile camp, their funeral pyres? 420
 The haughty mother, child of Tantalus,
 By sorrows burdened, stands a mournful stone
 In Phrygian Sipylos, Cadmus still,
 Lifting his head dreadful with serpents' crests,

Goes fleeing through Illyria's realm and leaves 425
 The long trail of his dragging body's length.
 Such precedents are thine, bear rule at will,
 If but our realm's accustomed fate is thine.

Lycus. Thou ravest, cease thy savage words, and
 learn

From thy Alcides how thou shouldst obey 430
 A king's command. Though my victorious hand
 Wield here a captured sceptre, though I rule
 The lands my arms have conquered without fear
 Of law, yet briefly in my own defence
 I'd speak. In bloody war thy father died, 435
 Thy brother fell? No bounds are kept by war,
 Nor may the drawn sword's fury be restrained
 Nor lightly tempered; war delights in blood.
 He for his kingdom fought, while we were drawn
 By base desire? We ask a war's results 440
 And not its cause. But let remembrance die.
 When arms are by the victor laid aside
 'Tis meet the vanquished also bury hate.
 We would not have thee do us reverence
 With bended knee as sovereign; we rejoice 445
 That with such great-souled courage thou hast borne
 Thy ruin; thou art worthy of a king:
 Be thou my queen.

Megara. Throughout my fainting limbs
 An icy shudder runs, what sinful words
 Assail my ears? I was not terrified 450
 When peace was broken and the crash of war
 Rang out around the city, that I bore
 Fearless, but shudder at this marriage bed.
 I feel myself a captive now indeed.
 Let chains weigh down my limbs, let tardy death 455

Be brought by creeping famine, nought avails
 To overcome my firm fidelity—
 Alcides, I will still be thine in death.

Lycus. A husband plunged in Hades gives thee
 strength ?

Megara. He went to hell that he might compass
 heaven. 460

Lycus. The burden of the earth's mass weighs him
 down.

Megara. No weight can weigh down him who bore
 the skies.

Lycus. I will compel thee.

Megara. Whom thou canst compel,
 Has not yet learned to die.

Lycus. What princely gift
 Can equal the new bridal I would give ? 465

Megara. Thy death or mine.

Lycus. Then die, demented one.

Megara. I haste to meet my husband.

Lycus. Is a slave
 Preferred by thee before our royal throne ?

Megara. How many kings that slave has brought
 to death !

Lycus. Why serves he then a king ? why bears the
 yoke ? 470

Megara. If tyranny were not, would valor be ?

Lycus. To conquer beasts and monsters then, thou
 think'st,

Is valorous ?

Megara. To conquer what all fear,
 Is valorous.

Lycus. The shades of Tartarus 474
 Press heavy on the boaster.

Megara. None have found
The path from earth to heav'n an easy road.

Lycus. What father makes him hope a home in
heaven?

Amphitryon. Unhappy wife of Hercules, be still;
'Tis mine to name the father and the race
Of great Alcides. Since that mighty man's 480
Illustrious deeds, since by his hand he made
Peace in whatever land sees Titan's rise
Or setting, since the gods were kept from harm,
And Phlegra reddened by the giant's blood,
Is not his father yet made manifest? 485
We have pretended Jove? Believe the hate
Of Juno.

Lycus. Why dost thou profane great Jove?
The race of mortals cannot wed with gods.

Amphitryon. Yet such the origin of many gods.

Lycus. Had they been slaves before they grew to
gods? 490

Amphitryon. The Delian shepherded Admetus'
sheep.

Lycus. But wandered not an exile through all
lands.

Amphitryon. Upon a wandering island was he
born,
His mother's self a wandering fugitive. 494

Lycus. Did beasts or monsters make Apollo fear?

Amphitryon. The dragon stained Apollo's earliest
shafts.

Lycus. Thou knowest not the ills Alcides bore
While yet an infant?

Amphitryon. From his mother's womb
By lightning torn, young Bacchus later stood

Beside his father, thunder-bearing Jove ; 500
 And did not he who guides the moving stars
 And makes the clouds to tremble lie concealed,
 A child, within a cave on Ida's cliff?
 Such high nativity costs heavy price,
 And to be born of gods brings countless ills. 505

Lycus. Know, whom thou seest wretched is but
 man.

Amphitryon. Call not him wretched whom thou
 seest brave.

Lycus. And can we call him brave who put aside
 His lion's skin and club to please a girl?
 Who shone in vestments of Sidonian dye? 510
 Shall we call brave the man whose bristling hair
 Dripped nard, whose hands so famed for warlike
 deeds

Struck gentle music from the tambourine?
 Who wreathed his warlike forehead with strange
 crowns?

Amphitryon. Young Bacchus did not blush to let
 his hair 515

Flow loose and in disorder, did not blush
 To move with step unsteady, while his robe,
 Bright with barbaric gold, behind him trailed.
 The brave refresh themselves from heavy toil.

Lycus. Eurytus' ruined house gives proof of this,
 And bands of maidens sacrificed like sheep— 521
 No Juno, no Eurystheus ordered this,
 These labors are his own.

Amphitryon. Thou knowest not all :
 It was indeed his work that Eryx fell,
 By his own gauntlets slain, and that to him 525
 The Libyan Antæus soon was joined ;

That altars dripping blood of slaughtered guests
 Drank, too, Busiris' blood so justly due ;
 These are Alcides' labors, 'twas his work 519
 That Cycnus, whom no sword might wound or slay,
 Was forced though free from wounds to suffer death :
 The triple monster, Geryon, by his hand
 Was conquered ; thou shalt share the fate of these,
 Though they ne'er sinned against the marriage bed.

Lycus. Whate'er for Jove is lawful is for kings 535
 As lawful ; thou hast given Jove a wife,
 Thou shalt give to the king. This truth, not new,
 With thee for teacher, let thy son's wife learn :
 Her husband willing even, she may take
 A better husband. But if she refuse 540
 With steadfastness the proffered marriage torch,
 She shall be forced to bear me noble seed.

Megara. O shades of Creon, O ye household gods
 Of Labdacus, O impious marriage torch
 Of Œdipus, give ye the wonted fate 545
 To such a marriage ! O ye bloody wives
 Of King Ægyptus' sons, be present now !
 Of the Danaïdes one failed to act,
 Let me fill up the measure of their crimes,

Lycus. Since still unbendingly thou dost refuse 550
 Our offered marriage, threatenest thy king,
 Thou shalt be made to feel a scepter's power.
 Embrace the altars—no divinity
 Shall snatch thee from me, not if Hercules
 Could come, a victor, through the riven earth. 555
 [To his followers] Heap wood and let the temples burn
 and fall

On those who suppliant seek them, let one pyre
 Consume both wife and children with its flames.

Amphitryon. The father of Alcides asks of thee
 One favor which beseems me well to ask : 560
 Let me be first to die.

Lycus. The king who bids
 That all should suffer punishment of death
 Has yet to learn to tyrannize ; seek out
 Another vengeance, let the wretched live,
 The happy die. While grow the funeral pyres 565
 With high-heaped wood, I will, with votive gifts,
 Go honor him who rules the angry seas.

Amphitryon. O thou of gods most strong, of heavenly
 powers
 Ruler and king, whose thunder makes men fear,
 Restrain the cruel king's ungodly hand. 570
 Why thus in vain entreat the gods? O son,
 Hear me in whatsoever place thou art!
 Why groans the earth? Why tremble suddenly
 The temples? We are heard. It is, it is
 The sounding step of Hercules. 575

SCENE III

Chorus.

O Fortune, envious ever of the brave,
 How ill thou meetest recompense to deed!
 Eurystheus rules in rest and quietness ;—
 Alcmena's son, whose hand sustained the skies,
 Must war with many monsters : he cut off 580
 The Hydra's fruitful neck ; and, when to sleep
 The dragon guardian of the precious fruit
 Had yielded up his ever-watchful eyes,
 He bore from the beguiled Hesperides

The golden apples ; he has visited 585
 The wandering Scythians in their changing homes,
 And peoples, dwellers in their native lands ;
 His foot has trod the frozen straits and seas
 Silent on silent shores—there waves rise not
 On the hard waters, for where ships have moved 590
 With all sail set, a solid path is trod
 By dwellers in Sarmatia, and the sea
 That changes with the ever-changing year
 Bears lightly sometimes horses, sometimes ships.
 He overcame the maiden queen who leads 595
 The virgin clans to war, who girds her loins
 With golden baldrick ; from her body took
 Rich spoil, the armor of her snowy breast ;—
 She paid him honor on her bended knee.
 By what hope driven headlong down to hell, 600
 Daring to tread the way without return,
 Saw'st thou Sicilian Proserpina's realm
 There neither northern blasts nor western winds
 Blow up the waters into swelling waves ;
 The shining of the twin Tyndarides 605
 Brings there to timorous sailors no relief ;
 The sea lies languid there with gloomy depths,
 And when with hungry teeth pale death bears down
 The countless people to the land of shades,
 One rower for so many is enough. 610
 Would thou mightst bind the laws of the harsh Styx,
 The distaff of the fates that turns not back !
 When thou on Nestor's Pylos madest war,
 The king who rules those many peoples fought
 With thee, against thee in his baleful hand 615
 Advanced his triple-pointed spear—he fled
 At but a wound, death's ruler feared to die.

Seize with strong hand thy fate, let in the light
 To Hades' mournful depths, to upper day
 Through pathless stretches force an easy road. 620
 With songs and supplications, Orpheus once
 Prevailed upon the cruel king of shades :
 He sought his wife Eurydice, the art
 That moved birds, woods, and rocks, delayed the streams,
 And caused the beasts to listen, calmed hell's self 625
 With unaccustomed music, and sweet sound
 Reëchoed clearly through the silent land.
 The Thracian women mourned Eurydice,
 And churlish gods wept unaccustomed tears,
 The stern-browed judges, who relentlessly 630
 Arraign the criminal and bring to light
 Old crimes, sat weeping for Eurydice,
 Until at length the arbiter of death
 Said : ' We are conquered, rise to upper day,
 I make but one condition ; thou, O wife, 635
 Follow thy husband ; look not thou behind
 To see thy wife, O husband, till thou seest
 The sky and day, and gates of Tænarus
 Are reached.' But true love cannot brook delay,
 By hasting to possess, he lost the gift. 640
 The castle that was conquered by a song,
 That castle strength can conquer.

ACT III

SCENE I

Hercules, Theseus.

Hercules. O thou who governest the gracious light,
Heaven's ornament ; who in thy flying car,
Running alternate courses, liftest up 645
Thy brilliant head above the world, forgive,
Phœbus, forgive, if aught thou seest amiss ;
Commanded so to do, I bring to light
The secrets of the world. Thou, heaven's judge
And father, hide behind thy thunderbolt 650
Thy face. O thou whose scepter rules the sea,
Seek now its depths. Ye gods who from the skies
Look down on earth, avert your glances now.
Fearing pollution from the vision strange,
Look heavenward, shun so ominous a sight ; 655
These two alone may look upon the crime :
She who commanded, he who brought to pass.
Earth offers space too small for Juno's hate
To find my labor and my chastisement.
I saw the kingdom to the sun unknown, 660
And inaccessible to all, the realm
Obscure, where Pluto reigns ; and, so fate willed,
Subdued it. Chaos of eternal night,
And whatso'er is worse than night, I saw,—
The melancholy gods and death itself. 665

Death scorned, I come again, what more remains?
 Hell I have seen and shown; if aught is left,
 Give other labors. Long thou leavest my hands
 Idle. What wouldst thou should be overcome?
 But why does hostile soldiery surround 670
 The temple? Why does fear of arms beset
 The sacred portals?

SCENE II

Hercules, Theseus, Amphytrion, Megara, The Children.

Amphytrion. Does hope deceive my sight, or does
 he come

Earth's vanquisher, the glory of the Greeks?
 Leaves he the gloomy, sad, and silent realm? 675
 Is this my son? My limbs are numb with joy!
 O son, the sure though tardy help of Thebes,
 Do I indeed embrace thee, once again
 Come forth to upper air? Or does a shade
 Beguile me? Is it thou? I recognize 680
 Thy breast, thy shoulders, and thy noble hands,
 Thy heavy club!

Hercules. My father, whence this woe?
 These mourning garments of my wife? Whence comes
 This doleful raiment of my sons? What loss
 Weighs down our house?

Amphytrion. The father of thy wife 685
 Is dead, and Lycus now usurps the throne,
 Death seeks thy sons, thy father, and thy wife.

Hercules. Ungrateful land, did no one come to aid
 The house of Hercules? The world I saved
 Looked on at such a crime? Why waste the day 690

In mourning? Slay the foe! I can endure
 This stain—Alcides' latest foe shall be
 This Lycus! Theseus, friend, I go to drink
 His hostile blood; remain thou here with these,
 Lest sudden violence should threaten them. 695
 The battle calls me; father, wife, defer
 Your loved embraces; Lycus shall announce
 To Dis that I have safely come again.

SCENE III

Theseus, Amphytrion, Megara, The Children.

Theseus. Put by thy grief, O queen, and thou who
 seest
 Thy son returned, restrain thy falling tears; 700
 Lycus shall pay the debt to Creon due—
 Shall pay? Nay pays.—Too slow the words, has
 paid!

Amphytrion. Whatever favoring god will hear our
 prayer,
 Bring now assistance to our fallen house.
 O great-souled comrade of my mighty son, 705
 His deeds of valor tell; what weary path
 Led downward to the gloomy land of shades,
 And how the Tartarean dog has borne
 His heavy chains.

Theseus. Thou bidst me call to mind
 Those deeds that make me, though secure, afraid. 710
 I hardly yet feel certain of my life;
 Light blinds my sight, my weakened eyes scarce bear
 The unaccustomed day.

Amphytrion. O Theseus, quench

Whate'er of fear still lingers in thy heart,
 Rob not thyself of labor's richest fruit ; 715
 Most sweet it is to call to mind those things
 Most hardly suffered. Tell me thy dread fate.

Theseus. Ye, I invoke, ye gods who rule the
 world,

And thee, the ruler of the realm of shades,
 And thee whom, snatched from Enna, all in vain 720
 Thy mother sought. O grant that I may speak
 Truly of hidden things concealed in earth.

A well-known mountain lifts from Sparta's plains.
 Its summits, where the heavy-wooded heights
 Of Tænarus stretch downward to the sea ; 725

Here lies the entrance to the hated home
 Of Dis, the great cliff yawns, and open lies
 With gaping jaws, the terrible abyss ;
 Through caverns limitless it shows to all 729

A pathway broad. At first not dark with shade—
 A slender gleam from sunlight left behind,
 A doubtful brightness from the troubled day,
 Falls gently inward and deceives the eye—
 So shines the light of dawn or failing day 734

With night commingled ; here the boundless fields
 Of empty space begin to open out,
 Toward which haste ever all the human race.

Nor is the journey hard, the path itself
 Leads on. As many times the tide impels
 Unwilling ships, so here the flying air 740
 And greedy chaos urge advance ; retreat
 Scarce ever do the constant shades permit.

Within the bosom of the vast abyss
 Unruffled Lethe glides with placid shoals
 And banishes all care ; the languid stream 745

Winds ever as Mæander's sluggish waves
 Flow onward, or recede, or stand in doubt
 Whether to seek their source or seek the sea.
 Here lies the slow Cocytus' ugly fen,
 Here the sad owl laments, the vulture here, 750
 Here sounds the horned owl's ill-fated cry,
 The gloomy foliage bristles with dark leaves ;
 Under the overhanging yew dull Sleep
 Dwells, and sad Hunger lies with sickly jaws,
 And tardy Shame hides here her conscious face ; . 755
 Alarm, and Fear, and dark and crushing Grief,
 Black Sorrow, trembling Sickness, steel-girt War,
 Follow, and, hidden at the end of all,
 Age with his staff assists his trembling steps. 759

Amphitryon. And is no fruitful land of Ceres there,
 Or Bacchus ?

Theseus. There no happy fields grow green,
 No ripe grain trembles in the gentle breeze,
 No trees stretch out their boughs weighed down with
 fruit,

The sterile wastes of those sad depths are drear,
 Eternally untilled that loathsome land ; 765
 The air is moveless, black night ever broods
 Above a moveless world ; the whole is dark
 With mourning, and the land of Death is worse
 Than Death himself.

Amphitryon. And what of him who reigns
 Within the gloomy place ? Upon what seat 770
 Sits he enthroned to give his people laws ?

Theseus. In an obscure recess of Tartarus
 There lies a plain, dense vapors shut it in
 With heavy gloom ; here flow from single source
 Two rivers ; one is calm, its silent flood 775

Bears down the sacred waters of the Styx,
 By this the gods make oath ; but Acheron
 Is hurried on with tumult wild and loud,
 And in its course it carries rocks away,
 Here is no path for backward-turning boats. 780

This double stream surrounds the royal seat
 Of Dis, a darksome wood conceals his home.
 The tyrant's threshold is a mighty cave ;
 Here lies the path the shades must take, and here
 His kingdom's gates. An open place is here, 785
 Where Pluto sits in cruel majesty

And to the new-come souls points out the way ;
 His brow is dark, but shows a kingliness
 Like that of Jove, his brother, and declares
 His noble race ; his face is that of Jove, 790
 But when he thunders. Of the fearful realm
 The ruler is himself the greater part,
 His glance gives fear to those whom others fear.

Amphitryon. And is it true that in the lower world
 A tardy justice shall be measured out, 795
 That guilty men shall pay the penalty
 They owe for crimes forgotten by themselves ?
 Who is this judge of truth, this arbiter
 Of justice ?

Thescus. One inquisitor alone
 Sits not to measure from that lofty seat 800
 Late justice to the trembling criminal.
 Minos of Gnosus sits in judgment there,
 And Rhadamanthus, and that one whose son
 Was Thetis' husband. Whatsoever wrong
 A man has done he suffers ; here the crime 805
 Finds out its author, and the criminal
 Is overtaken by his own ill deeds.

I saw fierce kings in prison, saw the backs
 Of helpless tyrants by plebeians torn.
 Who greatly governs, and, though lord of life. 810
 Preserves his hands unstained, and mildly holds
 A bloodless empire, nor puts men to death,
 He, having lived a long and blessed life,
 Seeks heaven, or, happy in the happy groves
 Of fair Elysium, shall again be judge. 815
 Ye who are kings abstain from human blood,
 Your crimes, but greater, shall return on you.

Amphitryon. And is a place ordained where guilty
 men

Are prisoned, where, as rumor says, keen pain
 Of ceaseless fetters punishes base souls? 820

Theseus. Ixion turns upon his flying wheel;
 A stone weighs down the neck of Sisyphus;
 In mid stream Tantalus, dry-lipped, pursues
 The waves—the river reaches to his chin
 And gives him hope, although so oft deceived,— 825
 Upon his lips the water perishes,
 Fruit fails him; Tityos affords a feast
 Forever to the vultures, and in vain
 The sad Danaides lift up full urns;
 The impious Cadmean women raging roam, 830
 And Phineas ever from his food must keep
 The eager Harpies.

Amphitryon. Of my son's brave fight
 Tell me. Does he bring back a willing gift,
 Or spoils of war?

Theseus. A savage cliff o'erhangs
 The stagnant shallows, where the waves move not, 835
 And where the lazy waters ever sleep;
 An old man hideous in mien and dress

Waits here and ferries o'er the silent stream
 The trembling shades ; his unkempt beard hangs low,
 His filthy robe is gathered in a knot, 840
 His hollow cheeks are soiled ; the ferryman
 With his long pole himself propels the boat ;
 Steering the vessel emptied of its freight
 Shoreward, he seeks again the waiting shades ;
 The throng receding, Hercules demands 845
 A way ; hard Charon cries : ' Where goest thou,
 Bold one ? Thy swift feet stay.' Alcmena's son
 Staid not, he seized the pole, and overcame
 The ferryman, and stepped into the boat ;
 The skiff, for many ample, under one 850
 Succumbed and settling heavily, each side
 The reeling vessel drank the Lethe's waves.
 Then conquered monsters fear, the Centaur grim,
 The Lapithæ, inflamed with war and wine ;
 And Lerna's Hydra hides its fruitful heads 855
 And seeks the Stygian fen's remotest part.
 Then came to view the home of hungry Dis,
 The Stygian dog affrights the manes here,
 Lifts up with dreadful noise his threefold neck, 859
 And guards the realm ; snakes lick his head, his hair
 Is bristling vipers, and a hissing snake
 Forms his long tail, his rage is as his form.
 He hears the sound of steps, his shaggy hair
 Of waving adders stands erect, with ears
 Lifted, he listens to the sound, no steps 865
 But those of shades his ears are wont to catch.
 As Jove's son nearer comes, within the cave
 The dog sits doubtful and not unafraid,
 Then with his baying wild he terrifies
 The silent place, the threatening serpents hiss, 870

The dreadful clangor of his awful voice
 Sent forth from triple mouths makes happy shades
 To tremble. From his shoulder taking then
 The lion's skin, the hero shields himself
 With this protection from the hissing mouths ; 875
 In his victorious hand his mighty club
 He lifts, now here, now there, with ceaseless blows
 He whirls it, strikes again ; the conquered dog
 Gives o'er his threats and, wearied, hangs his heads,
 And leaves the whole wide cavern free. Each lord
 Sitting upon his throne is filled with fear, 881
 And bids Alcides lead away the dog.
 Me, too, at his request they give to him.
 Then patting with his hand the monster's necks,
 He binds him with an adamantine chain. 885
 The dog, that dark realm's watchful guard, forgets
 His wonted fierceness, droops his timorous ears,
 And owns a master, quietly endures
 To be led forth, and with submissive mien
 Obeys, and strikes his flanks with serpent tail. 890
 But when he reached the mouth of Tænarus
 And the strange glow of unaccustomed light
 Upon his eyelids shone, the conquered one
 Resumed his former wrath and shook his chains
 Raging ; he almost dragged his victor back, 895
 And drew him down, and forced him to the ground.
 Alcides sought my aid, with doubled strength
 We two bore up to earth the angry dog,
 That struggled in an unavailing war.
 But when he saw the day, and gazed upon 900
 The sunlight's clear expanse, he closed his eyes,
 Shut out the hated sun, and backward turned,
 Bent earthward his three necks, then hid his head

Within Alcides' shadow. But there comes,
 With many shouts, a throng of citizens, 905
 They wear the laurel on their brows and sing
 The praises of most glorious Hercules.

SCENE IV

Chorus of Thebans.

Eurystheus, born too soon into the world,
 Commanded Hercules to pierce earth's depths—
 The number of his labors lacked alone 910
 This deed: to spoil the dark realm's king. He dared
 To enter those black portals where the path
 Leads downward to the distant land of shades,
 A gloomy way with dreadful forests dark,
 But filled with thronging people. As the crowd 915
 Pass through the city eager for the games
 At the new theater; as they rush to see
 Elean Jove when the fifth summer brings
 The sacred feast; as when the time returns
 Of lengthening nights, and, coveting sweet sleep, 920
 The balance holds the sun's car in the sea,
 The people haste to Ceres' sacred rites,
 And priests of Athens from the city pass
 To render to the goddess of the night
 Worship and honor, so the silent throng 925
 Move onward through the plain; some slow with age,
 And sad and sated with their length of days;
 Some, younger, seem to hither come in haste,
 Virgins who have not known the marriage yoke,
 And youths with flowing hair, and little ones 930
 Who scarcely yet can lisp their mother's name,—

To these is given to carry through the gloom
 Light, that they less may fear ; all others walk
 In darkness, sadly. How then feels the soul
 When light is gone and one must know himself 935
 Buried beneath the world's weight ? Chaos harsh,
 Base shadows, the dun color of the night,
 Reign there, the leisure of a silent world,
 And empty gloom.

May old age bear us late to that dark land, 940
 Too late none ever found the place from whence,
 When found, none ever may return again.

What profit then to hasten cruel fate ?
 The wide earth's restless throngs shall seek the shades
 And sail the still Cocytus ; all things move, 945
 O Death, from east and west toward thee alone ;
 Oh, come not ! Let us be prepared for thee !
 Though late thou comest, yet ourselves we haste,
 The very hour of birth begin to die.

Thebes' happy day has come ; O grateful ones, 950
 Before the altars kneel, slay victims meet,
 Ye men and maids the happy chorus join,
 And let the rich earth from the ploughshare rest.
 Peace by the hand of Hercules is made
 Between Aurora's land and Hesperus' 955
 And that where shadows are not, where the sun
 Moves ever in the zenith.

Alcides' hand has conquered every land
 That Thetis waters with her wide waves' sweep.
 The streams of Tartarus are overpassed, 960
 The lower world subdued, and he returns.
 No fear remains, nought lies beyond that land.
 Priests, crown your heads with holy poplar wreaths

ACT IV

SCENE I

Hercules, Theseus, Amphitryon, Megara, The Children.

Hercules. [Coming from the palace of Lycus.]
Felled by my conquering hand lies Lycus, dead ;
Whatever comrades have in life been his 965
Shall be the tyrant's comrades still in death.
Victorious now, I pay the sacred rites
To thee, my father, and the holy gods,
And heap the altars with the victims slain.
To thee, my help and stay, I make my prayers, 970
O warlike Pallas, in whose stern left hand
The ægis threatens, turning men to stone.
Lord of Lycurgus and the crimson sea,
Be present, bearing in thy hand the spear
Wound with green vines! And ye, twin deities, 975
Phœbus and Phœbus' sister,—she more skilled
In archery, as he in melody!
And thou my brother, whatsoever one
Inhabits heaven, not of Juno born!
Drive hither well-fed herds ; the Indian spice 980
And odorous woods from Araby heap high
Upon the altars, let rich perfumes rise.
The poplar binds our hair, crown thou thyself,
O Theseus, with thy country's olive leaves.
O Thunderer, we lift our hands to thee! 985
Thebes' builders, and grim Zethus' wooded caves,

And Dirce's noble fountain, and the home
Of Tyre's king who came as pilgrim here,
Protect. [*To the servants.*] Put incense now upon the
flame.

Amphitryon. First, son, make clean thy hands that
drip with blood 990
Of slaughtered foes.

Hercules. O would that I might pour
Libations to the gods of that loathed blood!
No liquor more acceptable could wet
The altars; hardly might one sacrifice
To Jove a worthier victim or more rich 995
Than this, an evil king.

Amphitryon. Lift up thy voice
And pray thy father that he end at last
Thy labors, to the wearied give repose.

Hercules. Prayersworthy of myself and Jove I make.
The sky and earth and ocean keep their place, 1000
Unhindered in their course th' eternal stars
Move onward, peace profound be over all;
For tillage only be the iron used,
The sword be sheathed, no storm disturb the sea,
No lightning from an angry Jove flash forth, 1005
No river swollen with the winter's snows
Lay bare the fields. All poisons die, no plant
With noxious juice be swelled, no tyrant harsh
Rule. If there yet lurk anywhere a crime,
Let it make haste; if any monster wait, 1010
Let it be mine. But what has come to pass?
The morn is darkened, Phœbus moves obscured,
Although the sky is cloudless; who is this
Who makes the day flee backward to its rise?
Whence comes it night's black head is lifted up, 1015

And stars are shining in the midday sky?
 See where in heaven our earliest labor shines,
 He flames with wrath, is ready to attack—
 Some constellation he will seize, he stands 1019
 Threatening and from his mouth he belches flame.
 Whatever stars the melancholy fall
 Or frozen winter in her chilly course
 Brings back, he covers in a single bound,
 Seeking the bull, the bringer of the spring,
 Whose neck he breaks.

Amphitryon. What sudden ill is this? 1025
 My son, why wanders so thy angry glance?
 Why scan with troubled eyes the faithless heavens?

Hercules. The conquered earth and swelling floods
 give place,
 Th' infernal realms have felt our force, the sky
 Is free—a labor worthy Hercules. 1030
 To the high spaces of the heavenly world
 I fly, my father promises a star.—
 What if he now refuse? Earth has not room
 For Hercules and gives him back at length
 To the celestial ones. Behold, in vain 1035
 The entire number of the gods invites
 And opens wide the doors of heaven, if one
 Refuse me entrance. Wilt thou then unbar
 The gates of heaven for me? Or shall I drag
 The portals of the stubborn world away? 1040
 Why hesitate? Resistless, I will loose
 The chains of Saturn and against the might
 Of an unduteous father will set free
 That father's father; I will lead to war
 The raging Titans, rocks and trees I'll bring, 1045
 The Centaur's mountain in my right hand seize,

By hill on hill will make a path to heaven ;
 Already on his Pelion Chiron sees
 Great Ossa piled, Olympus placed above
 Shall make a third step and shall reach the sky, 1050
 Or I will hurl it there.

Amphitryon. Be far the thought !
 A little calm thy great heart's forceful rage.

Hercules. Behold the dreaded giants come in arms,
 And Tityos leaves the shades ; how near the stars
 He stands with empty, lacerated breast ; 1055
 Cithæron totters, high Pallene shakes,
 And Tempe fails, One tears up Pindus' ridge,
 One seizes Cæta, horribly he threatens.
 The flaming furies smite with sounding lash,
 More near, more near they press their burning torch
 Into my face, and wild Tisiphone, 1061
 Her head encircled with its serpent crown,
 Fills up with torch opposed the empty door
 Behind the ravished dog. [*He sees his children.*]

But see where lurk
 The offspring of the hostile king, base seed 1065
 Of Lycus ; to your hated father now
 This right hand gives you back ; swift shaft, fly forth,
 So are Herculean weapons fitly used.

Amphitryon. Where blindly strikes his rage ? His
 mighty bow
 Is bent, the quiver opened, and the shaft 1070
 Flies singing forth, it passes through the neck
 And leaves the wound. [*Megara flies with the other
 child.*]

Hercules. From every hiding place
 I'll search the other out. Why make delay ?
 A greater war is mine : to overthrow

Mycene, that by my hand smitten down 1075
 The Cyclops' rocks may fall. Thither I go,
 To break the doors and tear away the posts,
 The stricken house shall fall. It open lies,
 I see the wicked father's son concealed.

Amphitryon. Lo, stretching toward his knees be-
 seeing hands, 1080
 The child with piteous voice entreats,—base crime,
 Of aspect sad and awful. His right hand
 Seizes the kneeling child and whirls him round
 Six times, then hurls him far, the child's head strikes,
 The roof is moistened with the scattered brains. 1085
 Ill-fated Megara, like one insane,
 To hiding flies, protecting on her breast
 Her youngest born.

Hercules. Though thou shouldst fly to seek
 The bosom of the Thunderer, this hand
 Would bear thee thence.

Amphitryon. [*To Megara.*] Oh whither, wretched
 one? 1090
 What hiding dost thou seek? No place is safe
 From angry Hercules. Embrace his knees,
 With soft entreaty strive to soothe his wrath.

Megara. Spare, husband, spare, I pray thee!
 Recognize
 Thy Megara! This child reflects thy form 1095
 And features, see his little hands stretched forth?

Hercules. I have thee, stepdame; give me my
 revenge!
 From thy loathed yoke free troubled Jove; but first,
 Before the mother, slay the wretched child. 1099

Megara. What wouldst thou, wilt thou slay thy son?
Amphitryon. The child

Before his father's glance is terrified,
 Fear slays him and he dies without a wound ;
 Now 'gainst the wife the heavy club is raised,
 Her bones are crushed, nor does her headless trunk
 exist.

None live. Oh gray-beard, too long lived, 1105
 Dost dare see this? If mourning irks, death's near.
 Sink in my heart thy dart, and wet thy club
 With my blood ; him whom falsely they proclaim
 Thy father, slay ; remove this shameful thing
 That stains thy fame, lest longer it should dim 1110
 Thy glory.

Chorus. Wouldst thou fling thyself, old man,
 Across the path of death? Insane with grief,
 Where goest thou? Fly, hide thyself afar,
 And spare the hand of Hercules this crime.

Hercules. 'Tis well, the base king's brood are all
 cut off. 1115

Those vowed to thee, O wife of mighty Jove,
 Are slain. A free gift, worthy thee, is brought,
 And other victims still shall Argives give.

Amphitryon. My son, a worthy gift is not yet made,
 Complete the sacrifice, the victim kneels 1120
 Before the altar, see he waits thy hand
 With lowered head. I freely give myself,
 Slay me. But what is this? His eyes' fierce glance
 Wanders, and drowsiness makes dim his sight.
 Do I behold the hand of Hercules 1125
 Tremble? His eyelids droop with sleep, his head
 Sinks wearied on his breast, his knees give way,
 He falls upon the earth like some great tree,
 The glory of the woods, or mighty crag
 That sinks into the sea. Dost thou still live 1130

Or does the rage that hurled thine own to death
 Give thee as well to Lethe? It is sleep,
 He breathes—may calm be granted him a space,
 That vigor, conquered by disease, return
 In dreamless sleep to soothe his troubled breast. 1135
 Slaves, take his weapons, lest he wake and rave.

SCENE II

Chorus.

The heavens mourn, and heaven's great father mourns,
 The fertile earth, and the unstable sea's
 Unstable waves; thou mournest most of all
 Who floodest earth and ocean with thy rays 1140
 And with thy brightness puttest night to flight,
 Alcides saw with thee thy rise, he saw
 Thy setting, Titan, knew thy two abodes.
 Ye heaven-dwellers, from these tumults wild
 Set free his spirit, turn his darkened mind 1145
 To better things. Thou vanquisher of ills,
 Sweet sleep, the soul's repose, the better part
 Of human life, Astræa's winged child,
 Mild brother of harsh Death, confusing oft
 The true and false, at once the best and worst 1150
 Foreteller of events, the wanderer's peace,
 Rest after day, companion of the night,
 Who comest to the slave as to the king,
 Who teachest man, afraid of death, to learn
 By slow degrees to know death's last long night, 1155
 O gently, softly soothe the wearied one,
 Let heavy languor on the vanquished lie;
 By slumber let his dauntless limbs be bound,

Leave not his savage breast before he finds
Again his former mind. 1160

See, on the ground he lies, his wild heart filled
With dreadful dreams, his trouble not yet eased ;
Accustomed on his heavy club to lean
His wearied head, he throws his arms about
And with his empty right hand seeks in vain 1165
Its weight. The fever's tide has not yet ebbed,
But surges as the waves by storm wind vexed
Surge to and fro and their long anger keep,
Tumultuous even when the wind has ceased.
Depart, tempestuous madness, from his soul ; 1170
Return, O valor, gentleness, and health.
Better, perhaps, a mind by madness stirred,
Insanity alone can prove him free
From guilty stain. Most nearly pure is he
Who sins and knows it not. 1175

Now, smitten by Herculean palms, his breast
Resounds, and blows from his all-conquering hand
Fall upon shoulders that once bore the world.
The heavens hear his heavy groans, the queen
Of the dark realm, and tameless Cerberus, 1180
Who lurks within his cave's depths, bound in chains ;
Chaos re-echoes with the mournful cries
And the great deeps that now uncovered lie.
Not lightly does he smite his mighty breast
By such calamity weighed down, three realms 1185
Echo the blows. Now give him cruel wounds,
Thou weapon, ornament long hung about
His neck,—thou quiver strong, and gallant shaft ;
Thou club, strong oak, with thy hard knots oppress
His breast, O *serve him now*, ye well-known arms,
In this his bitter need. 1195

O boys, O children of a luckless race,
By the sad path thy father knew go hence ;
Ye have not, sharer of your father's fame, 1194
Wrecked vengeance on hard kings with harsher war,
Nor, brave with hand and cæstus, learned to bend
Your supple members in the Argive games ;
Ye have but dared to balance the light shafts
From Scythian quivers, and with certain aim
To send them, and to shoot the flying stag. 1200
Go, shadows, to the Stygian portals go,
Ye innocents who on life's threshold fall,
By crime and by a father's madness slain !
Go, seek the wrathful monarch !

ACT V

SCENE I

Hercules, Amphitryon, Theseus.

Hercules. [Awaking and looking around in wonder.]

What place is this? What realm? What clime
of earth? 1205

Where am I? Underneath the eastern sky,
Or the cold constellation of the bear,
Or where the waters of the western seas
Wash up against the limits of the land?
What air is this I breathe? on what soil rest 1210
My wearied limbs? 'Tis true, I have returned!
Why prostrate lie those bloody bodies there?
Has not my mind put by the shapes of hell?
Although returned does hell's sad throng still move
Before my eyes? It shames me to confess:— 1215
I fear! I know not what my soul forebodes
Of heavy ill. My father, where art thou?
Where are my sons, my wife? Why is my side
Bare of the lion's spoil? Whither has fled
My lion's skin that served as cloak and couch? 1220
Where are my bow and arrows? Who could take
My weapons from me and I still alive?
What man could bear away such spoil nor fear
The sleeping Hercules? May I but see 1224
That man! *Thou strong one, come; my father Jove,*

Leaving his heaven, has begotten thee
 At whose creation longer than at mine
 The night endured. But what is this I see?
 My sons lie bathed in blood, my wife is dead!
 Does Lycus reign and Hercules returned? 1230
 Ye who beside Ismenus' waters dwell,
 Or in Athenian meadows, or the realm
 Of Trojan Pelops by two oceans wet,
 Help; show the author of these savage deeds;
 My anger else will kindle against all, 1235
 I count him foe who shows me not my foe.
 Alcides' vanquisher, wouldst thou be hid?
 Come forth; though thou seekst vengeance for the steeds
 Of bloody Thrace, or Geryon's slaughtered flocks,
 Or Libya's lord, I do not shun the fight. 1240
 I stand defenceless, with my weapons armed
 Thou mayest fall upon me weaponless.
 But why do Theseus and my father shun
 My glance? Why hide their faces? Stay your tears,
 Speak, who has slain my all? What, father, dumb? 1245
 Yet speak thou, Theseus, Theseus, faithful friend.
 Each, silent, hides his face and weeps; what shame
 Is mine? Has Argos tyrant, has the line
 Of Lycus overwhelmed us with such woe?
 By thine own self and by thy honored name, 1250
 To me propitious ever, by the fame
 Of my great deeds, speak, who o'erthrew my house?
 Whose prey am I?

Amphitryon. Unspoken be these ills.

Hercules. Shall I lack vengeance?

Amphitryon. Vengeance oft recoils.

Hercules. Who ever bore unmoved such wrongs as
mine? 1255

Amphitryon. Who stood in fear of heavier wrongs
than these.

Hercules. O father, can aught worse than this be found?

Amphitryon. Thou knowest but a part of all thy woe.

Hercules. Have pity, father; supplicating hands
I stretch—but what is this? He turns away; 1260
Here surely crime lies hid. Whence comes this blood?
What shaft is that with children's murder wet?
Alas! My own, in Hydra's venom dipped!
I need not ask what hand could bend that bow,
Or draw the bowstring that reluctant yields 1265
To me. My father, speak, is mine the crime?
He speaks not, it is mine.

Amphitryon. The grief is thine,
The crime thy stepdame's, thou art free from fault.

Hercules. Now send thy thunders from all parts of
heaven,
O great progenitor; forgetting me, 1270
Avenge thy grandsons, though with tardy hand.
The starry heavens roar, the sky shoots flame.
To Caspian cliffs bound fast, let eager birds
Upon my body feed. Why now lies bare
Prometheus' rock, the steep and woodless height 1275
Of Caucasus, where birds and beasts of prey
Are fed? Let the Symplegades which close
The Scythian waters stretch across the deep
Each way my fast bound hands, and when recurs
Th' alternate change, when the two rocks unite 1280
And at the blow the sea in foam is flung
To heaven, I shall lie between the rocks!
Why, building high a pile of heaped-up wood,
Should not this blood-stained form be burned with fire?
Thus, thus, it must be done; to realms below 1285

I will give back Alcides.

Amphitryon. Ah, not yet
Does madness leave him or his raving cease,
But all his raging burns against himself.

Hercules. Grim country of the Furies, prison house
Of hell-abiders, long decreed abode 1290
Of guilty throngs, if place of banishment
Lies hid beyond the shades of Erebus,
Unknown to Cerberus and me, O earth,
There hide me. I will lurk beyond the bounds
Of Tartarus. O heart, too fiercely tried! 1295
Who worthily might mourn for you, my sons,
Scattered through all the house? My tearless eyes
Have not the power to weep these heavy ills.
Give back my bow, my arrows; give my club.
For thee, my sons, I break my shaft, for thee 1300
Destroy my bow; this heavy club shall burn
An offering to thy shades; this quiver, full
Of Hydra-poisoned arrows, shall be laid
Upon thy funeral pile; the arms that slew
Shall pay the penalty. You, too, shall burn, 1305
O most unfortunate and cruel hands.

Amphitryon. Who ever called an act of madness
crime?

Hercules. Great madness often gains the height of
crime.

Amphitryon. Now, Hercules, thou needest all thy
strength;
Bear patiently this heavy weight of woe. 1310

Hercules. Frenzy has not so quenched my sense of
shame

That I can see all peoples flee my face.

My weapons, Theseus! Give me back, I pray,

In haste my stolen arms ; if I am sane,
 Give back my spear ; if madness holds me yet, 1315
 Fly, father, for I take the road to death.

Amphitryon. I pray thee by the sacred bond of blood,
 And by the holy name that binds us twain—
 Father or foster-father as you will—
 By these gray hairs that call for reverence, 1320
 Spare a bereft old man, weighed down with years.
 Thou only pillar of a falling house,
 One star of the afflicted, live for me.
 I never yet have reaped thy labor's fruit,
 But ever have I feared unfriendly seas, 1325
 Or savage monsters, or some cruel king,
 Or one proved faithless to the holy gods.
 Ever the father of an absent son,
 I long to see thee, touch thee, know thee mine. 1329

Hercules. Why longer should my spirit see the light?
 Nought now remains, my hand has banished all :
 Intelligence and weapons, wife and sons,
 My glory and my strength, my madness too.
 There is no healing for a soul defiled,
 The criminal must be by death made whole. 1335

Amphitryon. Thou'lt slay thy father.

Hercules. Nay, but, lest I should,
 I slay myself.

Amphitryon. Before thy father's eyes ?

Hercules. Through me such crime is even now well
 known.

Amphitryon. Remember rather deeds that all must
 praise,

And seek forgiveness for a single crime. 1340

Hercules. Shall he give pardon to himself, who found
 Pardon for none? I did my much-praised deeds

Obedient to command, this deed is mine.
 Have pity, father, whether thou art moved
 By fatherly compassion, my sad fate, 1345
 Or by my loss of innocence : give back
 My weapons, let my hand avenge my fate.

Theseus. Thy father's prayers have surely force
 enough,

Yet be by my entreaties also moved.
 Rise, meet this new attack and overcome. 1350
 As thou art wont. Take courage, never yet
 By evil was thy great heart put to shame.
 Thou needest all thy valor, Hercules ;
 Prevent the anger of great Hercules. 1354

Hercules. If yet I live, I have done grievous wrong ;
 But if I die, I have endured such wrong.
 I haste to cleanse the land ; before my eyes,
 But now, a monster hovered, harsh and wild,
 Unholy, cruel ; up, my hand, begin
 This heavy labor, greater than them all. 1360
 Dost stand inactive, brave in thy attack
 On boys alone and trembling motherhood ?
 Unless my arms are given back to me,
 The woods of Thracian Pindus I will fell,
 And burn Cithæron's ridge and Bacchus' grove, 1365
 My funeral pyre ; or all the Theban homes,
 The citizens, the temples of the gods,
 Above my body I will heap, will lie
 Entombed beneath a city overthrown ;
 And if the ruined walls should prove too light 13
 For my strong shoulders, and the seven gates
 Too lightly rest, in the world's heart, I'll hide,
 Pressed down beneath the burden of the earth.

Amphitryon. I give the weapons back.

Hercules. Those words become
The father of Alcides. Lo, this lad 1375
Was smitten by this arrow.

Amphitryon. Juno sent
That arrow by thy hand.

Hercules. I see it now !
Amphitryon. Behold, his heart, o'erwhelmed with
misery,
Swells in his troubled breast.

Hercules. The shaft is meet !
Amphitryon. Lo, now of thine own will thou doest
sin 1380
And consciously.

Hercules. What then wouldst thou command ?
Amphitryon. We ask for nothing, all our grief is full.
Thou only canst preserve my son for me ;
Thou canst not take him from me. Fear is gone,
Thou canst not make me wretched, glad thou mayest.
Whatever thou shouldst do, resolve to act 1386
As knowing that thy fate and glory stand
At parting of the ways : live thou or die,
This spirit, wearied both by time and fate,
Trembles upon my lips to quickly pass.— 1390
So slowly does one give a father life ?
I will not longer bear delay, but thrust
The fatal iron in my breast—this crime
Will be the crime of no mad Hercules.

Hercules. O father, spare me, spare, call back thy
hand. 1395
Succumb, my valor, hear a father's words ;
Add to thy other labors this one more,
Herculean,—let me live ! O Theseus, friend,
Lift up *my stricken father* from the ground,

My guilty hands must shun that sacred head. 1400

Amphitryon. I clasp thy hands most gladly; I
will go

Leaning on this; embracing this, my heart
Will put away its sorrows.

Hercules. Whither fly?

Where hide myself? In what land lie concealed?

What Nile, or Tanais, or Persian flood, 1405

Or fiercely flowing Tigris, or wild Rhine,

Or Tagus, or Iberis' turgid stream,

That flows with wealth, can wash this right hand clean?

Might cold Mæotis, pour its icy flood

Upon me, or the ocean through my hands 1410

Flow ever, still they'd show the stain of blood.

O murderer, whither flee? To east or west?

There is no place of exile, earth rejects

And all the stars flee from me; Titan saw

With milder face the hell dog Cerberus. 1415

O Theseus, faithful friend, seek out for me

Some secret, far-remote abiding place;

Since, looking on another's guilt, thou still

Canst love the guilty, show me now, I pray,

The gratitude thou owest: take me back 1420

To hell's dark shades, endue me in thy chains,

That place will hide me. But that knows me, too!

Theseus. One land awaits thee, there will Mars
restore

The weapons to thy hands made clean from blood.

That land, Alcides, calls thee which is wont 1425

To make unspotted the immortal gods.



THE DAUGHTERS OF TROY

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

AGAMEMNON.

ULYSSES.

PYRRHUS.

CALCHAS.

TALTHYBIUS.

ASTYANAX.

HECUBA.

ANDROMACHE.

HELEN.

POLYXENA.

AN OLD MAN.

MESSENGER.

CHORUS OF TROJAN WOMEN.

SCENE : *Troy.*

THE DAUGHTERS OF TROY

ACT I

SCENE I

Hecuba. Let him who puts his trust in kingly
crown,

Who rules in prince's court with power supreme
Who, credulous of heart, dreads not the gods,
But in his happy lot confides, behold
My fate and Troy's. Never by clearer proof 5
Was shown how frail a thing is human pride.
Strong Asia's capital, the work of gods,
Is fallen ; and she beneath whose banners fought
The men who drink the Tanais' cold stream
That flows by sevenfold outlet to the sea, 10
And those who see the new-born day where blends
Tigris' warm waters with the blushing strait,
Is fallen ; her walls and towers, to ashes burned,
Lie low amid her ruined palaces.
The royal courts take fire ; far and near 15
Smolders the home of King Assaracus.
But flames stay not the eager conqueror's hand
From plundering Troy. The sky is hid with smoke ;
And day, as though enveloped in black cloud,
Is dark with ashes. Eager for revenge, 20
The victor *stands and measures* her slow fall ;

Forgets the long ten years ; deplores her fate ;
 Nor yet believes that he has vanquished her,
 Although he sees her conquered in the dust.
 The pillagers are busy with the spoil ; 25
 A thousand ships will hardly bear it hence.

Witness, ye adverse deities ; and ye,
 My country's ashes, and thou, Phrygia's king,
 Buried beneath the ruins of thy realm ;
 Thou, too, great shade, whose life was all in all 30
 To Troy ; my numerous offspring, lesser shades ;—
 Whatever ills have happened ; whatsoe'er
 Apollo's raving priestess, to whose word
 The god denied belief, has prophesied,
 I first foresaw, ere yet my fated child 35
 Was born, nor hid my fear, but prophesied
 Vainly, before Cassandra spoke in vain.
 Alas, 'twas not the crafty Ithacan,
 Nor the companions of his night attack,
 Nor Sinon false, who flung into your midst 40
 Devouring flame ; the glowing torch was mine !
 Aged, and sick of life, why weep for Troy ?
 Unhappy one, recall more recent woes ;
 The fall of Troy is now an ancient grief !
 I've seen the murder of a king—base crime ! 45
 And, at the altar's foot incurred, I've seen
 A baser crime, when Æacus' fierce son,
 His left hand in the twisted locks, bent back
 That royal head, and drove the iron home
 In the deep wound ; freely it was received, 50
 And buried deep, and yet drawn forth unstained,
 So sluggish is the blood of frozen age.
 This old man's cruel death at the last mete
 Of human life, and the immortal gods

sc. 11] *THE DAUGHTERS OF TROY* 57

Witnesses of the deed, and fallen Troy's 55
Fair altars, cannot stay the savage hand.

Priam, the father of so many kings,
Has found no grave, and in the flames of Troy
No funeral pyre, and yet the wrathful gods
Are not appeased ; behold, the lot is cast 60
That gives to Priam's daughters and his sons
A master ; and I go to servitude.

One would have Hector's wife, one Helenus',
And one Antenor's ; nor are wanting those
Who long for thee, Cassandra ; me alone 65
They shun, and I alone affright the Greeks.

Why rest from lamentations, captive ones ?
Make moan, and smite your breasts, pay funeral
rites ;

Let fatal Ida, home of doom-fraught judge,
Reëcho now your sorrowful lament. 70

SCENE II

Hecuba, Chorus of Trojan Women.

Chorus. You bid those weep who are not new to
grief ;

Our lamentations have not ceased to rise
From that day when the Phrygian stranger sought
Grecian Amyclæ, and the sacred pine
Of Mother Cybele, through Grecian seas 75

A pathway cut. Ten times the winter snows
Have whitened Ida—Ida stripped of trees
To furnish Trojan dead with funeral pyres—
Ten times the trembling reaper has gone forth
To cut the bearded grain from Ilium's fields, 80

Since any day has seen us free from tears.
 New sorrows ask new mourning. Hasten now
 Your lamentations, beat upon your breasts ;
 We, the ignoble crowd, will follow still
 Our mistress, we are not untaught in tears. 85

Hecuba. O faithful ones,
 Companions of my grief, unbind your hair ;
 About your shoulders let it flow defiled
 With Troy's hot ashes ; fill your hands with these,
 This much of Troy you are allowed to take. 90
 Come with bare breasts, loose robes, and naked
 limbs ;

Why veil your modest bosoms, captive ones ?
 Gird up your flowing tunics, free your hands
 For fierce and frequent beating of your breasts.
 So I am satisfied, I recognize 95
 My Trojan followers ; again I hear
 Their wonted lamentations. Weep indeed ;
 We weep for Hector.

Chorus We unbind our hair,
 So often torn in wild laments, and strew
 Troy's glowing ashes on our heads ; permit 100
 Our loosened robe to drop from shoulders bare ;
 Our naked bosoms now invite our blows.
 O sorrow, show thy power ; let Ilium's shores
 Give back the blows, nor from her hollow hills
 Faint Echo sound the closing words alone, 105
 But let her voice repeat each bitter groan,
 And air and ocean hear. With cruel blows
 Smite, smite, nor be content with faint laments :
 We weep for Hector.

Hecuba. For thee our hands have torn our naked
 arms 110

And bleeding shoulders ; Hector, 'tis for thee
 We beat our brows and lacerate our breasts ;
 The wounds inflicted in thy funeral rites
 Shall gape and flow with blood once more. Thou wast
 The pillar of thy land, her fates' delay, 115
 The prop of wearied Phrygians, and the wall
 Of Troy ; by thee supported, firm she stood,
 Ten years upheld. With thee thy country fell,
 Her day of doom and Hector's were the same.
 Weep now for Priam, smite for him your breasts ; 120
 Hector has tears enough.

Chorus. Ruler of Phrygia, twice a captive made,
 Receive our tears, receive our wild laments.
 Whilst thou wast king, Troy suffered many woes ;
 Twice by Greek weapons were her walls assailed ; 125
 Twice were they made a target for the darts
 Of Hercules ; and when that kingly band,
 Hecuba's offspring, had been offered up,
 With thee, their sire, the funeral rites were stayed ;
 An offering to great Jove, thy headless trunk 130
 Lies on Sigeum's plain.

Hecuba. Women of Troy,
 For others shed your tears ; not Priam's death
 I weep ; say rather all, thrice happy he !
 Free he descended to the land of shades,
 Nor will he ever bear on conquered neck 135
 The Grecian yoke ; nor the Atridæ see ;
 Nor look on shrewd Ulysses ; nor, a slave,
 Carry the trophies on his neck to grace
 A Grecian triumph ; feel his sceptered hands
 Bound at his back ; nor add a further pomp 140
 To proud Mycenæ, forced in golden chains
 To follow Agamemnon's royal car.

Chorus. Thrice happy Priam! as a king he went
Into the land of spirits; wanders now
Through the safe shadows of Elysian Fields, 145
In happiness among the peaceful shades,
And seeks for Hector. Happy Priam say!
Thrice happy he, who, dying in the fight,
Bears with him to destruction all his land.

ACT II

SCENE I

Talthybius, Chorus of Trojan Women.

Talthybius. O long delay, that holds the Greeks
in port 150

Whether they seek for war or for their homes.

Chorus. Say what the reason of the long delay,
What god forbids the Greeks the homeward road?

Talthybius. I tremble, and my spirit shrinks with
fear;

Such prodigies will hardly find belief. 155

I saw them, I myself; Titan had touched

The mountain summits, dayspring conquered night,

When, on a sudden, with a muttered groan,

Earth trembled, and laid bare her lowest depths;

The forests, the high wood and sacred grove 160

Thundered with mighty ruin; Ida's cliffs

Fell from her summit; nor did earth alone

Tremble, the ocean also recognized

Her own Achilles, and laid bare her depths;

In the torn earth a gloomy cavern yawned; 165

A way was opened up from Erebus

To upper day; the tomb gave up its dead;

The towering shade of the Thessalian chief

Leaped forth as when, preparing for thy fate,

O Troy, he put to flight the Thracian host, 170

And struck down Neptune's shining, fair-haired son;

Or as when, breathing battle 'mid the host,
 He choked the rivers with the fallen dead,
 And Xanthus wandered over bloody shoals
 Seeking slow channels ; or as when he stood 175
 In his proud car, a victor, while he dragged
 Hector and Troy behind him in the dust.

His wrathful voice rang out along the shore :
 Ye cravens, go, refuse the honors due
 My manes. Let the thankless ships set sail 180
 Upon my seas. Not lightly Greece has felt
 Achilles' wrath ; that wrath shall heavier fall.
 Polyxena, betrothed to me in death,
 Must die a sacrifice at Pyrrhus' hand,
 And moisten with her blood my tomb. He spake, 185
 Exchanged the day for night, and sought again
 The realm of Dis. He took the riven path ;
 Earth closed above him, and the tranquil sea
 Lay undisturbed, the raging wind was still,
 Softly the ocean murmured, Tritons sang 190
 From the blue deep their hymeneal chant.

SCENE II

Agamemnon, Pyrrhus.

Pyrrhus. When, homeward turning, you would
 fain have spread
 Your happy sails, Achilles was forgot.
 By him alone struck down, Troy fell ; her fall,
 Ev'n at his death, was but so long delayed 195
 As she stood doubtful whither she should fall ;
 Haste as you will to give him what he asks,
You give too late. Already all the chiefs

Have carried off their prizes ; what reward
 Of lesser price have you to offer him 200
 For so great valor ? Does he merit less ?
 He, bidden shun the battle and enjoy
 A long and peaceful age, outnumbering
 The many years of Pylos' aged king,
 Put off the false disguise of woman's dress 205
 His mother gave, and stood confessed a man
 Electing war. When haughty Telephus
 Refused him entrance to the rugged coast
 Of rocky Mysia, with his royal blood
 He stained Achilles' hand, but found that hand 210
 Gentle as strong. When Thebes was overcome
 Eëtion, its conquered ruler, saw
 His realm made captive. With like slaughter fell
 Little Lyrnessus, built at Ida's foot ;
 Briseïs' land was captured ; Chryse, too, 215
 The cause of royal strife, was overthrown ;
 And well-known Tenedos, and Sciro's isle
 That, rich with fertile pastures, nourishes
 The Thracian herd, and Lesbos that divides
 The Ægean straits, Cilla to Phœbus dear, 220
 Yes, and whatever land Calcus laves
 Swollen by rains of spring. Such overthrow
 Of nations, such distress, so many towns
 O'erwhelmed in such a whirlpool would have been
 To any other, glory, honor, fame,— 225
 Achilles is but on the march ; so sped
 My father, and so great the war he waged
 While he made ready for his great campaign.
 Though I were silent of his other deeds,
 Would it not be enough that Hector died ? 230
 My father conquered Ilium ; as for you,

You have but torn it down. I joy to speak
 The noble deeds of my illustrious sire :
 How Hector's father saw him prostrate fall ;
 How Memnon in his uncle's sight was slain, 235
 Whose mother shuns the light, with pallid cheek
 Mourning his fate ; and at his own great deeds
 Achilles trembles, and, a victor, learns
 That death may touch the children of a god.
 The Amazons' harsh queen, thy final fear, 240
 Last yielded. Wouldst thou honor worthily
 His mighty arms, then yield him what he will,
 Though he should ask a virgin from the land
 Of Argos or Mycenæ. Dost thou doubt ;
 Changing so soon, art loth to offer up 245
 A maiden, Priam's child, to Peleus' son ?
 Thy child to Helen was a sacrifice,
 'Tis not an unaccustomed gift I ask.
Agamemnon. To have no power to check the
 passions' glow
 Is ever found a fault of youthful blood ; 250
 That which in others is the zeal of youth,
 In Pyrrhus is his father's fiery heart.
 Thus mildly once I stood the savage threats
 Of Æacus' fierce son ; most patiently 254
 He bears, who is most strong. With slaughter harsh
 Why sprinkle our illustrious leader's shade ?
 Learn first how much the conqueror may do,
 The conquered suffer. 'Tis the mild endure,
 But he who harshly rules, rules not for long.
 The higher Fortune doth exalt a man, 260
 Increasing human power, so much the more—
 Fearing the gods who too much favor him,
 And not unmindful of uncertain fate—

He should be meek. In conquering, I have learned
How in a moment greatness is o'erthrown. 265

Has triumph over Troy too soon made proud?
We stand, we Greeks, in that place whence Troy fell.
Imperious I have been, and borne myself
At times too proudly; Fortune's gifts correct
In me the pride they oft in others rouse. 270

Priam, thou mak'st me proud, but mak'st me fear.
What can I deem my scepter, but a name
Made bright with idle glitter; or my crown,
But empty ornament? A sudden chance
May rob me of them, needing not, perhaps, 275
A thousand ships nor ten years' war. I own

(May I do this, O Argive land, nor wound
Thy honor?) I have troubled Phrygia
And wished her conquered; but I would have stayed
The hand that crushed and laid her in the dust. 280

A foe enraged and victory gained by night
Will never check their raging, at command;
Whatever cruel or unworthy deed
Appeared in any, anger was the cause—
Anger and darkness and the savage sword 285
Made glad with blood and seeking still for more.

All that yet stands of ruined Troy shall stand,
Enough of punishment—more than enough—
Has been exacted, that a royal maid
Should fall, and, offered as a sacrifice 290

Upon a tomb, should crimson with her blood
The ashes, and this hateful crime be called
A marriage—I will never suffer it.
Upon my head would rest the guilt of all;
He who forbids not crime when he has power, 295
Commands it.

Pyrrhus. Shall Achilles' shade receive
No prize ?

Agamemnon. Ah yes, for all shall tell his praise,
And unknown lands shall sing his glorious name ;
And if his shade would take delight in blood
Poured forth upon his ashes, let us slay 300
Rich sacrifice of Phrygian sheep. No blood
Shall flow to cause a sorrowing mother's tears.
What fashion this, by which a living soul
Is sacrificed to one gone down to hell ?
Think not to soil thy father's memory 305
With such revenge, commanding us to pay
Him reverence with blood.

Pyrrhus. Harsh king of kings !
So arrogant while favoring fortune smiles,
So timid when aught threatens ! Is thy heart
So soon inflamed with love and new desire ; 310
And wilt thou always bear from us the spoil ?
I'll give Achilles back, with this right hand,
His victim, and, if thou withholdest her,
I'll give a greater, one more meet to be
The gift of Pyrrhus. All too long our hand 315
Has ceased from slaughter, Priam seeks his peer.

Agamemnon. That was, indeed, the worthiest war-
like act
Of Pyrrhus : with relentless hand he slew
Priam, whose suppliant prayer Achilles heard.

Pyrrhus. We know our father's foes were suppliants,
But Priam made his prayer himself, whilst thou, 321
Not brave to ask, and overcome with fear,
Lurked trembling in thy tent, and sought as aid
The intercessions of the Ithacan
And Ajax.

Agamemnon. That thy father did not fear, 325
I own ; amid the slaughter of the Greeks
And burning of the fleet, forgetting war,
He idly lay, and with his plectrum touched
Lightly his lyre.

Pyrrhus. Mighty Hector then
Laughed at thy arms but feared Achilles' song ; 330
Amid the universal fear, deep peace
Reigned through Thessalia's fleet.

Agamemnon. There was in truth
Deep peace for Hector's father in that fleet.

Pyrrhus. To grant kings life is kingly.

Agamemnon. Why didst thou
With thy right hand cut short a royal life? 335

Pyrrhus. Mercy gives often death instead of life.

Agamemnon. Mercy seeks now a virgin for the
tomb?

Pyrrhus. Thou deemst it crime to sacrifice a maid?

Agamemnon. More than their children, kings
should love their land. 339

Pyrrhus. No law spares captives or denies revenge.

Agamemnon. What law forbids not, honor's self
forbids.

Pyrrhus. To victors is permitted what they will.

Agamemnon. He least should wish to whom is
granted most.

Pyrrhus. And this thou say'st to us, who ten long
years 344

Have borne thy heavy yoke, whom Pyrrhus freed?

Agamemnon. Does Scyros breed such pride?

Pyrrhus. No guilty stain

Of brother's blood is there.

Agamemnon. Shut in by waves—

Pyrrhus. Nay, but the seas are kin. I know thy house—

Yea, Atreus' and Thyestes' noble line!

Agamemnon. Son of Achilles ere he was a man,
And of the maid he ravished secretly— 351

Pyrrhus. Of that Achilles, who, by right of race,
Through all the world holds sway, possesses still
The ocean through his mother, and the shades
Through Æacus, through Jupiter the sky. 355

Agamemnon. Achilles, who by Paris' hand was slain.

Pyrrhus. One whom not even the gods fought openly.

Agamemnon. To curb thy insolence and daring words

I well were able, but my sword can spare
The conquered.

[*To some of the soldiers, who surround him.*]

Call the gods' interpreter, 360
We'll rule us by his council.

[*A few of the soldiers go out, Calchas comes in.*]

SCENE III

Agamemnon, Pyrrhus, Calchas.

Agamemnon. [*To Calchas.*] Thou, who hast freed
the anchors of the fleet,

Ended the war's delay, and by thy arts

Canst open heaven, to whom the secret things

Revealed in sacrifice, in shaken earth, 3

that draws through heaven its flaming length

these words have been

sc. iv] *THE DAUGHTERS OF TROY* 69

To me the words of doom, speak, Calchas, tell
What thing the god commands, and govern us
By thy wise counsels.

Calchas. Fate a pathway grants 370
To Grecians only at the wonted price.

A virgin must be slain upon the tomb
Of the Thessalian leader, and adorned
In robes like those Thessalian virgins wear
To grace their bridals, or Ionian maids, 375

Or daughters of Mycene; and the bride
Shall be by Pyrrhus to his father brought—
So is she rightly wed. Yet not alone
Is this the cause that holds our ships in port,
But blood must flow, and nobler blood than thine, 380
Polyxena. Whom cruel fate demands—
Grandchild of Priam, Hector's only son—
Hurled headlong from Troy's wall must meet his
death;

Then shall our thousand sails make white the strait.

SCENE IV

Chorus of Trojan Women.

Is it true, or does an idle story 385

Make the timid dream that after death,

When the loved one shuts the wearied eyelids,

When the last day's sun has come and gone,

And the funeral urn has hid the ashes,

He shall still live on among the shades? 390

Does it not avail to bear the dear one

To the grave? Must misery still endure

Longer life beyond? Does not all perish

When the fleeting spirit fades in air
 Cloudlike? When the funeral fire is lighted 395
 'Neath the body, does no part remain?

Whatsoe'er the rising sun or setting
 Sees; whatever ebbing tide or flood
 Of the ocean with blue waters washes,
 Time with Pegasean flight destroys. 400
 As the sweep of whirling constellations,
 As the circling of their king the sun
 Speed the ages, as, obliquely turning,
 Hecate hastes, so all must seek their fate;
 He who touches once the gloomy water 405
 Sacred to the gods, exists no more.

As the sordid smoke from smoldering embers
 Swiftly dies, or as a heavy cloud,
 That the north wind scatters, ends its being
 So the soul that rules us slips away; 410
 After death is nothing; death is nothing

But the last mete of a swift-run race,
 Then let eager souls their hopes relinquish,
 Fearful find the end of fear. Believe
 Eager time and the abyss engulf us; 415
 Death is fatal to the flesh, nor spares
 Spirit even; Tænarus, the kingdom

Of the gloomy monarch, and the door
 Where sits Cerberus and guards the portal,
 Are but empty rumors, senseless names, 420
 Fables vain, like dreams that trouble sleep.
 Ask you whither go we after death?
 Where they lie who never have been born.

ACT III

SCENE I

Andromache, An Old Man.

Andromache. Why tear your hair, my Phrygian
followers,
Why beat your breasts and mar your cheeks with
tears? 425

The grief is light that has the power to weep.
Troy fell for you but now, for me long since
When fierce Achilles urged at speed his car,
And dragged behind his wheel my very self;
The axle, made of wood from Pelion's groves, 430
Groaned heavily, and under Hector's weight
Trembled. O'erwhelmed and crushed, I bear un-
moved

Whate'er befalls, for I am stunned with grief.
I would have followed Hector long ago,
And freed me from the Greeks, but this my son 435
Held me, subdued my heart, forbade my death,
Compelled me still to ask the gods a boon,
Added a longer life to misery.
He took away my sorrow's richest fruit—
To know no fear. All chance of better things 440
Is snatched away, and worse are yet to come;
'Tis wretchedness to fear where hope is lost.

Old Man. What sudden fear assails thee, troubled
one?

Andromache. From great misfortunes, greater ever
spring ;

Troy needs must fill the measure of her woes. 445

Old Man: Though he should wish, what can the
god do more ?

Andromache. The entrance of the bottomless abyss
Of gloomy Styx lies open ; lest defeat
Should lack enough of fear, the buried foe
Comes forth from Dis. Can Greeks alone return ? 450
Death certainly is equal ; Phrygians feel
This common fear ; but me alone a dream
Of dreadful night has terrified.

Old Man. What dream

Andromache. The sweet night's second watch was
hardly passed,

The Seven Stars were turning from the height ; 455

At length there came an unaccustomed calm

To me afflicted ; on my eyes there stole

Brief sleep, if that dull lethargy be sleep

That comes to grief-worn souls ; when, suddenly,

Before my eyes stood Hector, not as when 460

He bore against the Greeks avenging fire,

Seeking the Argive fleet with Trojan torch ;

Nor as he raged with slaughter 'gainst the Greeks,

And bore away Achilles' arms—true spoil,

From him who played Achilles' part, nor was 465

A true Achilles. Not with flame-bright face

He came, but marred with tears, dejected, sad,

Like me, and all unkempt his loosened hair ;

Yet I rejoiced to see him. Then he said,

Shaking his head : 'O faithful wife, awake ! 470

Bear hence thy son and hide him, this alone

's safety. Weep not ! Do you weep for Troy ?

Would all were fallen! Hasten, seek some place
 Of safety for the child.' Then I awoke,
 Cold horror and a trembling broke my sleep. 475
 Fearful, I turned my eyes now here, now there.
 Me miserable, careless of my son,
 I sought for Hector, but the fleeting shade
 Slipped from my arms, eluded my embrace.
 O child, true son of an illustrious sire; 480
 Troy's only hope; last of a stricken race;
 O offspring of an all too noble house,
 Too like thy father! Such my Hector's face,
 Such was his gait, his manner, so he held
 His mighty hands, and so his shoulders broad, 485
 So threatened with bold brow when shaking back
 His heavy hair! Oh, born too late for Troy,
 Too soon for me, will ever come that time,
 That happy day, when thou shalt build again
 Troy's walls, lead back again her scattered hosts, 490
 Avenging and defending mightily,
 And give again a name to Troy's fair land?
 But, mindful of my fate, I dare not wish;
 Let us but live, for life is all that slaves
 Can hope. Alas, what safety can I find, 495
 Where hide thee? That high citadel, god-built,
 World-famous, to the envious exposed,
 Is dust, her streets flame-swept, and naught remains
 Of all the mighty city, not so much
 As where to hide an infant. Oh, what place 500
 Of safety can I find? The mighty tomb,
 Reared to my husband—this the foe must fear.
 His father, Priam, in his sorrow built,
 With no ungenerous hand, great Hector's tomb;
 I trust him to his father. Yet I fear 505

The baleful omen of the place of tombs,
And a cold sweat my trembling members bathes.

Old Man. The safe may choose, but we must seize
defence.

Andromache. We may not hide him without heavy
fear

Lest some betray him.

Old Man. Cover up the trace 510

Of our device.

Andromache. And if the foe should ask?

Old Man. In the destruction of the land he died,—
It oft has saved a man that he was deemed
Already dead.

Andromache. No other hope is left.
He bears the heavy burden of his name; 515
If he must come once more into their power
What profits it to hide him?

Old Man. Victors oft
Are savage only in the first attack.

Andromache. [*To Astyanax.*] What distant, path-
less land will keep thee safe,
Or who protect thee, give thee aid in fear? 520

O Hector, now as ever guard thine own,
Preserve the secret of thy faithful wife,
And to thy trusted ashes take thy child!
My son, go thou into thy father's tomb.
What, do you turn and shun the safe retreat? 525

I recognize thy father's strength of soul,
Ashamed of fear. Put by thy inborn pride,
Thy courage; take what fortune has to give.
See what is left of all the Trojan host:
A tomb, a child, a captive! We must yield 530
To our misfortunes. Dare to enter now

Thy buried father's sacred resting-place ;
 If fate is kind thou hast a safe retreat,
 If fate refuse thee aid, thou hast a grave. 534

Old Man. The sepulcher will safely hide thy son ;
 Go, lest thy fears betray thee and so him,

Andromache. One's fear is lightlier borne when
 near at hand,

But elsewhere will I go, since that seems best.

Old Man. Restrain thy words, speak not, but curb
 thy fear,

This way the Grecian leader bends his steps. 540

SCENE II

Andromache, Ulysses with a retinue of warriors. [*The
 old man withdraws.*]

Ulysses. Coming a messenger of cruel fate,
 I pray you deem not mine the bitter words
 I speak, for this is but the general voice
 Of all the Greeks, too long from home detained
 By Hector's child : him do the fates demand. 545

The Greeks can hope for but a doubtful peace,
 Fear will compel them still to look behind
 Nor lay aside their armor, while thy child,
 Andromache, gives strength to fallen Troy.
 So prophesies the god's interpreter ; 550

And had the prophet Calchas held his peace,
 Hector had spoken ; Hector and his son
 I greatly fear : those sprung of noble race
 Must needs grow great. With proudly lifted head
 And haughty neck, the young and hornless bull 555
 Leads the paternal herd and rules the flock ;
 And when the tree is cut, the tender stalk

Soon rears itself above the parent trunk,
 Shadows the earth, and lifts its boughs to heaven ;
 The spark mischance has left from some great fire 560
 Renews its strength ; like these is Hector's son.
 If well you weigh our act, you will forgive,
 Though grief is harsh of judgment. We have spent
 Ten weary winters, ten long harvests spent
 In war ; and now, grown old, our soldiers fear, 565
 Even from fallen Troy, some new defeat.
 'Tis not a trifling thing that moves the Greeks,
 But a young Hector ; free them from this fear ;
 This cause alone holds back our waiting fleet,
 This stops the ships. Too cruel think me not, 570
 By lot commanded Hector's son to seek ;
 I would have sought Orestes, equally,
 Suffer with patience what your conqueror bore.

Andromache.

Alas, my son,

Would that thou wert within thy mother's arms !
 Would that I knew what fate encompassed thee, 575
 What region holds thee, torn from my embrace !
 Although my breast were pierced with hostile spears,
 My hands bound fast with wounding chains, my sides
 By biting flame were girdled, not for this
 Would I put off my mother-guardianship ! 580
 What spot, what fortune holds thee now, my son ?
 Art thou a wanderer in an unknown land,
 Or have the flames of Troy devoured thee ?
 Or does the conqueror in thy blood rejoice ?
 Or, slain by some wild beast, perhaps thou liest 585
 On Ida's summit, food for Ida's birds ?

Ulysses. No more pretend. Thou mayst not so
 deceive

Ulysses ; I have ere this overcome

The wiles of mothers, though of blood divine.
 Put by thy empty plots; where is thy son? 590

Andromache. Where is my Hector? Where the
 Trojan host?

Where Priam? Thou seek'st one, I seek them all.

Ulysses. What thou refuseth willingly to tell,
 Thou shalt be forced to say.

Andromache. She rests secure

Who can, who ought, nay, who desires to die. 595

Ulysses. Near death may put an end to such proud
 boast.

Andromache. Ulysses, if thou hop'st through fear
 to force

Andromache to speak, threat longer life;

Death is to me a wished-for messenger.

Ulysses. With fire, scourge, torment, even death
 itself, 600

I will drag forth thy heart's deep-hidden thought;

Necessity is stronger far than love.

Andromache. Threat flames, wounds, hunger, thirst,
 the bitter stings

Of cruel grief, all torments, sword plunged deep

Within this bosom, or the dungeon's gloom— 605

Whatever angry, fearful victors may;

Learn that a mother's courage casts out fear.

Ulysses. And yet this love, in which thou standst
 entrenched

So stubbornly, admonishes the Greeks

To think of their own children. Even now, 610

After these long ten years, this weary war,

I should fear less the danger Calchas threats,

If for myself I feared—but thou prepar'st

War for Telemachus.

Andromache. Unwillingly
 I give the Grecians joy, but I must give. 615
 Ulysses, anguish must confess its pain ;
 Rejoice, O sons of Atreus ; carry back
 As thou art wont, Ulysses, to the host
 The joyous news : great Hector's son is dead.

Ulysses. How prove it to the Greeks ?

Andromache. Fall on me else
 The greatest ill the victor can inflict : 621
 Fate free me by an easy, timely death,
 And hide me underneath my native soil,
 Lightly on Hector lie his country's earth
 As it is true that, hidden from the light, 625
 Deep in the tomb, among the shades he rests.

Ulysses. Accomplished then the fate of Hector's
 race ;

A joyous message of established peace
 I take the Greeks. [*He turns to go, then hesitates.*]

Ulysses, wouldst thou so ? 629

The Greeks will trust thee, for thou trustest—whom ?
 A mother. Would a mother tell this lie
 Nor fear the augury of dreaded death ?
 They fear the auguries, who fear naught else.
 She swears it with an oath—yet, falsely sworn,
 What has she worse to fear ? Now call to aid 635
 All that thou hast of cunning, stratagem,
 And guile, the whole Ulysses ; truth dies not.
 Watch well the mother ; see—she mourns, she weeps,
 She groans, turns every way her anxious steps,
 Listens with ear attentive ; more she fears 640
 Than sorrows ; thou hast need of utmost care.

[*To Andromache.*] For other mothers' loss 'tis right
 to grieve ;

Thee, wretched one, we must congratulate
 That thou hast lost a son whose fate had been
 To die, hurled headlong from the one high tower 645
 Remaining of the ruined walls of Troy.

Andromache. [*Aside.*] Life fails, I faint, I fall, an
 icy fear

Freezes my blood.

Ulysses. [*Aside.*] She trembles; here the place
 For my attack; she is betrayed by fear;
 I'll add worse fear. [*To his followers.*]

Go quickly; somewhere lies, 650

By mother's guile concealed, the hidden foe—
 The last remaining foe of our Greek race.

Go, seek him, drag him hither. [*After a pause as
 though the child were found.*] It is well;

The child is taken; hasten, bring him me.

[*To Andromache.*] Why do you look around and seem
 to fear? 655

The boy is dead.

Andromache. Would fear were possible!
 Long have I feared. The mind must oft unlearn
 The lesson learned.

Ulysses. Since by a happier fate
 Snatched hence, the lad forestalls the sacrifice,
 The lustral offering from the walls of Troy 660
 And may not now obey the seer's command,
 Thus saith the prophet: this may be atoned,
 And Grecian ships at last may find return,
 If Hector's tomb be leveled with the ground,
 His ashes scattered on the sea; the tomb 665
 Must feel my hand, since Hector's child escapes
 His destined death.

Andromache. [*Aside.*] Alas, what shall I do?

A double fear distracts me ; here my son,
 And there my husband's sacred sepulcher,
 Which conquers? O inexorable gods, 670
 O manes of my husband—my true gods,
 Bear witness ; in my son 'tis thee I love,
 My Hector, O that he may live to bear
 His father's image!—Shall the sacred dust
 Be cast upon the waves? Nay, better death.— 675
 Canst thou, a mother, bear to see him die,—
 To see him from Troy's tower downward hurled?
 I can and will, that Hector, after death,
 Be not the victor's sport. The boy can feel
 The pain, where death has made the father safe. 680
 Decide, which one to give to punishment.
 Ungrateful, why in doubt? Thy Hector's here!
 'Tis false, each one is Hector; this one lives,
 Perchance th' avenger of his father's death.
 I cannot save them both, what shall I do? 685
 Oh, save the one whom most the Grecians fear!

Ulysses. I will fulfil the oracle, will raze
 The tomb to its foundations.

Andromache. What you sold
 To us?

Ulysses. I'll do it, level with the dust
 The sepulcher.

Andromache. I call the faith of heaven, 690
 Achilles' faith, to aid; come, Pyrrhus, save
 Thy father's gift.

Ulysses. The tomb shall instantly
 Be leveled with the plain.

Andromache. This crime alone
 The Greeks had shunned; ye've sacked the holy fanes
 Even of favoring gods, but spared the tomb. 695

I will not suffer it, unarmed I'll stand
 Against your armored host ; rage gives me strength,
 And as the savage Amazon opposed
 The Grecian army, or the Mænad wild,
 Armed with the thyrsus, by the god possessed, 700
 Wounds herself in her madness, feeling not
 The pain, and scatters terror through the grove,
 So will I rush into your midst and die
 Defending the dear ashes of my dead. [*She places
 herself before the grave.*]

Ulysses. [*Angrily to the shrinking soldiers.*]
 Why pause? A woman's wrath and feeble noise 705
 Alarms you so? Do quickly my command.

[*The soldiers go toward the grave, Andromache
 throws herself upon them.*]

Andromache. The sword must first slay me.—Ah,
 woe is me,
 They drive me back. Hector, come forth the
 tomb ;
 Break through the fate's delay, and overwhelm
 The Grecian chief—thy shade would be enough! 710
 He shakes the weapon, hurls the fire-brand ;
 Greeks, see you Hector? Or do I alone
 Perceive him?

Ulysses. I will lay it in the dust.

Andromache. [*Aside.*] What have I done? To ruin
 I have brought
 Father and son together ; yet, perchance, 715
 With supplications I may move the Greeks.
 The tomb's vast weight will presently destroy
 Its hidden treasure ; O my wretched child,
 Die anywhere the Fates decree but here.
 Oh, may the father not o'erwhelm the son, 720

The son fall not upon his father's dust!

[She casts herself at the feet of Ulysses.]

Ulysses, at thy feet a suppliant

I fall, and with my right hand clasp thy knees;

Never before a suppliant, here I ask

Thy pity on a mother; hear my prayer. 725

With patience; on the fallen lightly press,

Since thee the gods lift up to greater heights!

The gifts thou grant'st the wretched are to fate

A hostage; so again thou mayst behold

Thy wife; and old Laertes' years endure 730

Until once more he see thee; so thy son

Receive thee home, outrun thy fairest hopes

In his good fortune, and his age exceed

Laertes', and his gifts outnumber thine.

Have pity on a mother to whose grief 735

Naught else remains of comfort.

Ulysses. Bring forth the boy, then thou mayst ask
for grace.

Andromache. Come hither from thy hiding-place,
my son,

Thy wretched mother's lamentable theft.

SCENE III

Ulysses, Andromache, Astyanax.

Andromache. Ulysses, this is he who terrifies 740

The thousand keels, behold him. Fall, my son,

A suppliant at the feet of this thy lord,

And do him reverence; nor think it base,

Since Fortune bids the wretched to submit.

Forget thy royal race, the power of one 745

Renowned through all the world; Hector forget;

Act the sad captive on thy bended knee,

And imitate thy mother's tears, if yet
 Thou scelest not thy woes. [*To Ulysses.*] Troy saw
 long since

The weeping of a royal child : the tears 750
 Of youthful Priam turned aside the threats
 Of stern Alcides ; he, the warrior fierce
 Who tamed wild beasts, who broke the gates of Dis,
 And opened up the dark way back to earth,
 Was conquered by his youthful foeman's tears. 755
 'Take back,' he said, 'the reins of government,
 Receive thy father's kingdom, but maintain
 Thy scepter with a better faith than he ;'
 So fared the captives of this conqueror ;
 Study the gentle wrath of Hercules ! 760
 Or do the arms alone of Hercules
 Seem pleasing to thee ? Of as noble race
 As Priam's, at thy feet a suppliant lies,
 And asks of thee his life ; let fortune give
 To whom she will Troy's kingdom. 765

Ulysses. Indeed the mother's sorrow moves me
 much !

Our Grecian mothers' sorrow moves me more,
 To cause whose bane this child would grow a man.

Andromache. These ruins of a land to ashes burned
 Could he arouse ? Or could these hands build Troy ?
 Troy has no hope, if such is all remains. 771

We Trojans can no longer cause thee fear.
 Does recollection of his father rouse
 Pride ? In the dust that father's form was dragged.
 With Troy in ruins, even his father's self 775
 Had lost that courage which great ills o'ercome.
 If vengeance is your wish, what worse revenge
 Than to this noble neck to fit the yoke ?

Make him a slave. Who ever yet denied
This bounty to a king?

Ulysses. The seer forbids, 780
'Tis not Ulysses who denies the boon.

Andromache. Artificer of fraud, plotter of guile,
Whose warlike valor never felled a foe ;
By the deceit and guile of whose false heart
E'en Greeks have fallen, dost thou make pretence 785
Of blameless god or prophet? 'Tis the work
Of thine own heart. Thou, who by night mak'st war,
Now dar'st at last one deed in open day—
A brave boy's death.

Ulysses. My valor to the Greeks
Is known, and to the Phrygians too well known. 790
We may not waste the day in idle talk—
Our ships weigh anchor.

Andromache. Grant a brief delay,
While I, a mother, for my son perform
The last sad office, satiate my grief,
My mother's sorrow, with a last embrace. 795

Ulysses. I would that I might pity! What I may,
Time and delay, I grant thee ; let thy tears
Fall freely ; weeping ever softens grief.

Andromache. O pledge of love, light of a fallen
house,
Last of the Trojan dead, fear of the Greeks, 800
Thy mother's empty hope, for whom I prayed—
Fool that I was—that thou mightst have the years
Of Priam, and thy father's warlike soul,
The gods despise my vows ; thou ne'er shalt wield
A scepter in the kingly halls of Troy, 805
Metē justice to thy people, nor shalt send
Thy foes beneath thy yoke, nor put to flight

The Greeks, drag Pyrrhus at thy chariot wheels,
 Nor ever in thy slender hands bear arms ;
 Nor wilt thou hunt the dwellers in the wood, 810
 Nor on high festival, in Trojan games,
 Lead swiftly on a band of noble youth,
 Nor round the altars with swift-moving steps,
 That the reëchoing of the twisted horn
 Makes swifter, honor with accustomed dance 815
 The Phrygian temples. Oh, most bitter death !

Ulysses. Great sorrow knows no limit, cease thy
 moans !

Andromache. How narrow is the time we seek for
 tears !

Grant me a short delay : that with these hands
 His living eyes be bound. My little one, 820
 Thou diest, but feared already by thy foes ;
 Thy Troy awaits thee ; go, in freedom go,
 To meet free Trojans.

Astyanax. Mother, pity me !

Andromache. Why hold thy mother's hands and
 clasp her neck,

And seek in vain a refuge ? The young bull, 825
 Thus fearful, seeks his mother when he hears
 The roaring of the lion ; from her side
 By the fierce lion driv'n, the tender prey
 Is seized, and crushed, and dragged away ; so thee
 Thy foeman snatches from thy mother's breast. 830
 Child, take my tears, my kisses, my torn locks ;
 Thus laden with remembrances of me
 Go to thy father, bear him these few words
 Of my complaint : ' If still thy spirit keeps
 Its former cares, if died not on the flames 835
 Thy former love, why leave Andromache

To serve the Grecians? Hector, cruel one,
 Dost thou lie cold and vanquished in the grave?
 Achilles came again.' Take then these tears,
 These locks, for these are all that now remain 840
 Since Hector's death, and take thy mother's kiss
 To give thy father; leave thy robe for me,
 Since it has touched his tomb and his dear dust;
 I'll search it well so any ashes lurk
 Within its folds.

Ulysses. Weep no more; bear him hence; 845
 Too long he stays the sailing of the fleet.

SCENE IV

Chorus of Trojan Women.

What country calls the captives? Tempe dark?
 Or the Thessalian hills? or Phthia's land
 Famous for warriors? Trachin's stony plains,
 Breeders of cattle? or the great sea's queen, 850
 Iolchos? or the spacious land of Crete
 Boasting its hundred towns? Gortyna small?
 Or sterile Tricca? or Mothone crossed
 By swift and frequent rivers? She who lies
 Beneath the shadow of the Ætean woods, 855
 Who sent the hostile bow not once alone
 Against the walls of Troy?
 Or Olenos whose homes lie far apart?
 Or Pleuron, hateful to the virgin god?
 Or Trœzen on the ocean's curving shore? 860
 Or Pelion, mounting heavenward, the realm
 Of haughty Prothous? There in a vast cave
 Great Chiron, teacher of the savage child,

Struck with his plectrum from the soundings strings
 Wild music, stirred the boy with songs of war. 865
 Perchance Carystus, for its marbles famed,
 Calls us ; or Chalcis, lying on the coast
 Of the unquiet sea whose hastening tide
 Beats up the strait ; Calydna's wave-swept shore :
 Or stormy Gonoëssa ; or the isle 870
 Of Peparethus, near the seaward line
 Of Attica ; Enispe, smitten oft
 By Boreas ; or Eleusis, revered
 For Ceres' holy, secret mysteries ?
 Or shall we seek great Ajax' Salamis ? 875
 Or Calydon, the home of savage beasts ?
 Or countries that the Titaëssa laves
 With its slow waters ? Scarphe, Pylos old,
 Or Bessas, Pharis, Pisa, Elis famed
 For the Olympian games ? 880
 It matters not what tempest drives us hence,
 Or to what land it bears us, so we shun
 Sparta, the curse alike of Greece and Troy ;
 Nor Argos seek, nor cruel Pelop's home,
 Mycenæ, and Neritus hemmed within 885
 Narrower limits than Zacynthus small,
 Nor treacherous cliffs of rocky Ithaca.
 O Hecuba, what fate, what land, what lord
 Remains for thee ? In whose realm meetst thou death ?

ACT IV

SCENE I

Helen, Hecuba, Andromache, Polyxena.

Helen [*soliloquizing*]. Whatever sad and joyless
marriage bond 890

Holds slaughter, lamentations, bloody war,
Is worthy Helen. Even to fallen Troy
I bring misfortune, bidden to declare
The bridal that Achilles' son prepares 895
For his dead father, and to lend my robe
And Grecian ornaments. By me betrayed,
And by my fraud, must Paris' sister die.
So be it, this were happier lot for her ;
A fearless death must be a longed-for death.
Why shrink to do his bidding? On the head 900
Of him who plots the crime remains the guilt.

[*Aloud to Polyxena.*]

Thou noble daughter of Troy's kingly house,
A milder god on thy misfortune looks
Prepares for thee a happy marriage day.
Not Priam nor unfallen Troy could give 905
Such bridal, for the brightest ornament
Of the Pelasgian race, the man who holds
The kingdom of the wide Thessalian land,
Would make thee his by lawful marriage bonds.
Great Tethys, and the ocean goddesses, 910
And Thetis, gentle nymph of swelling seas,

Will call thee theirs ; when thou art Pyrrhus' bride
Pelcus will call thee kin, as Nercus will.
Put off thy robe of mourning, deck thyself
In gay attire ; unlearn the captive's mien, 915
And suffer skilful hands to smooth thy hair
Now so unkempt. Perchance fate cast thee down
From thy high place to seat thee higher still ;
To their great profit some have been enslaved.

Andromache. This one ill only lacked to fallen

Troy : 920

Pleasure, while Pergamus still smoking lies !
Fit hour for marriage ! Dare one then refuse ?
When Helen would persuade, who doubtful weds ?
Thou curse ! Two nations owe to thee their fall !
Seest thou the royal tomb, these bones that lie 925
Unburied, scattered over all the field ?
Thy bridal is the cause. All Asia's blood,
All Europe's flows for thee, whilst thou, unstirred,
Canst see two husbands fighting, nor decide
Which one to wish the victor ! Go, prepare 930
The marriage bed ; what need of wedding torch
Or nuptial lights, when burning Troy provides
The fires for these new bridals ? Celebrate,
O Trojan women, honor worthily
The marriage feast of Pyrrhus. Smite your breasts,
And weep aloud.

Helen. Soft comfort is refused 936
By deep despair, which loses reason, hates
The very sharers of its grief. My cause
I yet may plead before this hostile judge,
Since I have suffered heavier ills than she. 940
Andromache mourns Hector openly,
Hecuba weeps for Priam, I, alone,

In secret, weep for Paris. Is it hard,
 Grievous, and hateful to bear servitude?
 For ten long years I bore the captive's yoke. 945
 Is Ilium laid low, her household gods
 Cast down? To lose one's land is hard indeed—
 To fear it worse. Your sorrow friendship cheers,
 Me conquerors and conquered hate alike.
 For thee there long was doubt whom thou shouldst
 serve, 950

My master drags me hence without the chance
 Of lot. Was I the bringer of the war?
 Of so great Teucric carnage? Think this true
 If first a Spartan keel thy waters cut ;
 But if of Phrygian oars I was the prey, 955
 By the victorious goddess as a prize
 Given for Paris' judgment, pardon me !
 An angry judge awaits me, and my cause
 Is left to Menelaus. Weep no more,
 Andromache, put by thy grief. Alas, 960
 Hardly can I myself restrain my tears.

Andromache. How great the ill that even Helen
 weeps !

Why does she weep? What trickery or crime
 Plots now the Ithacan? From Ida's top,
 Or Troy's high tower, will he cast the maid 965
 Upon the rocks? Or hurl her to the deep
 From the great cliff which, from its riven side,
 Out of the shallow bay, Sigeon lifts?
 What wouldst thou cover with deceitful face?
 No ill were heavier than this: to see 970
 Pyrrhus the son-in-law of Hecuba
 And Priam. Tell the penalty thou bringst.
 Take from defeat at least this evil,—fraud.

Thou seest thou dost not find us loth to die.

Helen. Would that Apollo's prophet bade me take

The long delay of my so hated life ; 976

Or that, upon Achilles' sepulcher,

I might be slain by Pyrrhus' cruel hand,

The sharer of thy fate, Polyxena,

Whom harsh Achilles bids them give to him— 980

To offer to his manes, as his bride

In the Elysian Fields.

[Polyxena shows great joy, Hecuba sinks fainting to the ground.]

Andromache. See with what joy a noble woman
meets

Death-sentence, bids them bring the royal robe,
And fitly deck her hair. She deemed it death 985

To be the bride of Pyrrhus, but this death

A bridal seems. The wretched mother faints,

Her sinking spirit fails ; unhappy one,

Arise, lift up thy heart, be strong of soul !

Her life hangs by a thread—how slight a chance 990

Would make her happy!—But she breathes, she
lives,

Death flies the wretched.

Hecuba. Lives Achilles still

To vex the Trojans? Still pursues his foes ?

Light was the hand of Paris ; but the tomb

And ashes of Achilles drink our blood. 995

Once I was circled by a happy throng

Of children, by their kisses weary made,

Parted my mother love amongst them all.

She, now, alone is left ; for her I pray,

Companion, solace, healer of my grief, 1000

The only child of Hecuba, her voice

Alone may call me mother! Bitter life,
 Pass from me, slip away, spare this last blow!
 Tears overflow my cheeks—a storm of tears
 Falls from my eyes!

Andromache. We are the ones should weep,
 We, Hecuba, whom, scattered here and there, 1006
 The Grecian ships shall carry far away.
 The maid will find at least a sepulcher
 In the dear soil of her loved native land.

Helen. Thy own lot known, yet more thou'lt envy
 hers. 1010

Andromache. Is any portion of my lot unknown?

Helen. The fatal urn has given thee a lord.

Andromache. Whom call I master? Speak, who
 bears me hence

A slave?

Helen. Lot gave thee to the Scyrian king.

Andromache. Happy Cassandra, madness spared
 thee this, 1015

Madness and great Apollo's aid.

Helen. The prince
 Of kings claims her.

Hecuba. Rejoice, rejoice, my child;
 Cassandra envies thee thy bridals, thine
 Andromache desires. Is there one
 Seeks Hecuba for bride?

Helen. Thou fall'st a prey 1020
 To the unwilling Ithacan.

Hecuba. Alas,
 What raging, cruel, unrelenting god
 Gives kings by lot to be the prey of kings?
 What god unfriendly thus divides the spoil?
 What cruel arbiter forbids us choose 1025

Our masters? With Achilles' arms unites
Great Hector's mother? To Ulysses' lot!
Conquered and captive am I now indeed,
Beset by all misfortunes! 'Tis my lord
Puts me to shame, and not my servitude! 1030
Isle small and sterile, by rough seas enclosed,
Thou wilt not hold my grave! Lead on, lead on,
Ulysses, I delay not, I will go—
Will follow thee; my fate will follow me.
No tranquil calm will rest upon the sea; 1035
Wind, war, and flame shall rage upon the deep,
My woes and Priam's! When these things shall
come,
Respite from punishment shall come to Troy.
Mine is the lot, from thee I snatch the prize!
But see where Pyrrhus comes with hasty steps 1040
And savage mien. Why pause? On, Pyrrhus, on!
Into this troubled bosom drive the sword,
And join to thy Achilles his new kin!
Slayer of aged men, come, here is blood,
Blood worthy of thy sword; drag off thy spoil, 1045
And with thy hideous slaughter stain the gods—
The gods who rule in heaven and those in hell!
What can I pray for thee? I pray for seas
Worthy these rites; I pray the thousand ships,
The fleet of the Pelasgians, may meet 1050
Such fate as that I fain would whelm the ship
That bears me hence a captive.

SCENE II

Chorus. Sweet is a nation's grief to one who grieves—

Sweet are the lamentations of a land!
 The sting of tears and grief is less when shared 1055
 By many ; sorrow, cruel in its pain,
 Is glad to see its lot by others shared,
 To know that not alone it suffers loss.
 None shuns the hapless fate that many bear ;
 None deems himself forlorn, though truly so, 1060
 If none are happy near him. Take away
 His riches from the wealthy, take away
 The hundred cattle that enrich his soil,
 The poor will lift again his lowered head ;
 'Tis only by comparison man 's poor. 1065
 O'erwhelmed in hopeless ruin, it is sweet
 To see none happy. He deplores his fate
 Who, shipwrecked, naked, finds the longed-for port
 Alone. He bears with calmer mien his fate
 Who sees, with his, a thousand vessels wrecked 1070
 By the fierce tempest, and upon a plank
 Escaping safe, returns to shore, the while
 The northwest wind, collecting all the waves,
 Drives them from shore : and when the radiant ram,
 The gold-fleeced leader of the flock, bore forth 1075
 Phryxus and Helle, Phryxus mourned the fall
 Of Helle dropped into the Grecian sea.
 Pyrrha, Deucalion's wife, restrained her tears,
 As he did, when they saw the sea, naught else,
 And they alone of living men remained. 1080
 The fleet shall soon far scatter this sad band,
 Soon shall the trumpet sound to spread the sail,

Soon dip the laboring oars, and Troy's shores flee,
When shall the land grow faint and far, the sea
Expand before, Mount Ida fade behind? 1085
Then grows our sorrow ; then what way Troy lies
Mother and son shall gaze. The son shall say,
Pointing the while, ' There where the curving line
Of smoke floats, there is Ilium.' By that sign
Shall Trojans know their country. 1090

ACT V

SCENE I

Hecuba, Andromache, Messenger.

Messenger. O bitter, cruel, lamentable fate!
In these ten years of war what crime so hard,
So sad, has Mars encountered? What decree
Of fate shall I lament? Thy bitter lot,
Andromache? Or thine, thou aged one? 1095

Hecuba. Whatever woe thou mournst is Hecuba's;
Their own griefs only others have to bear,
I bear the woes of all, all die for me,
And sorrow follows all who call me friend.

Andromache. Tell of the deaths—the tale of double
crime; 1100
Suffering ever loves to hear its woes;
Speak, tell us all.

Messenger. One mighty tower remains
Of Troy, no more is left; from this high seat
Priam, the arbiter of war, was wont
To view his troops; and in this tower he sat 1105
And, in caressing arms, embraced the son
Of Hector, when that hero put to flight
With fire and sword the trembling, conquered Greeks.
From thence he showed the child its father's deeds.
This tower, the former glory of our walls, 1110
Is now a lonely, ruined mass of rock

Thither the throng of chiefs and people flock ;
 From the deserted ships the Grecian host
 Come pouring ; on the hills some find a place,
 Some on the rising cliffs, upon whose top 1115
 They stand tiptoe ; some climb the pines, and beech,
 And laurel, till beneath the gathered crowd
 The whole wood trembles ; some have found the peaks
 Of broken crags ; some climb a ruined roof,
 Or toppling turret of the falling wall ; 1120
 And some, rude lookers-on, mount Hector's tomb.
 Through all the crowded space, with haughty mien,
 Passes the Ithacan, and by the hand
 Leads Priam's grandson ; nor with tardy step
 Does the young hero mount the lofty wall. 1125
 Standing upon the top, with fearless heart
 He turns his eagle glance from side to side.
 As the young, tender cub of some wild beast,
 Not able yet to raven with its teeth,
 Bites harmlessly, and proudly feels himself 1130
 A lion ; so this brave and fearless child,
 Holding the right hand of his enemy,
 Moves host and leaders and Ulysses' self.
 He only does not weep for whom all weep,
 But while the Ithacan begins the words 1135
 Of the prophetic message and the prayers
 To the stern gods, he leaps into the midst
 Of Priam's kingdom, of his own accord.

Andromache. Was ever such a deed by Colchians
 done,

Or wandering Scythians, or the lawless race 1140
 That dwells beside the Caspian ? Never yet
 Has children's blood Busiris' altars stained,
 Nor Diomedes feasted his fierce steeds

On children's limbs ! Who'll take thy body up,
My son, and bear it to the sepulcher? 1145

Messenger. What would that headlong leap have
left ? His bones

Lie dashed in pieces by the heavy fall,
His face and noble form, inheritance
From his illustrious father, are with earth
Commingled ; on the cruel rocks his neck 1150
Is broken, and his head is crushed, his brains
Dashed out ; his body lies devoid of form.

Andromache. This, too, is like his father.

Messenger. When headlong from the wall the boy
was cast,

And the Achaians wept the crime they did, 1155

Then turned these same Achaians to new crimes,

And to Achilles' tomb. With quiet flow

The Rhoetean waters beat the further side,

And on the other side the level plain

Slopes gently upward, and surrounds the place 1160

Like a wide amphitheater ; here the strand

Is thronged with lookers-on, who think to end

With this last death their vessels' long delay,

And glad themselves to think the foeman's seed

At last cut off. The fickle, common crowd 1165

Condemn the crime, but feast their eyes on it.

The Trojans haste with no less eagerness

To their own funeral rites, and, pale with fear,

Behold the final fall of ruined Troy.

As at a marriage, suddenly advance 1170

The bridal torches, Helen goes before,

Attendant to the bride, with sad head bent.

' So may Hermione,' the Phrygians pray,

' Be wed, and so base Helen find again

Her husband.' Sudden terror seizes both 1175
 The awe-struck peoples. With her glance cast down,
 Modestly comes the victim ; but her cheeks
 Glow, and her beauty shines unwontedly ;
 So shines the light of Phœbus gloriously
 Before his setting, when the stars return 1180
 And day is darkened by approaching night.
 The throng is silenced ; all men praise the maid
 Who now must die : some praise her lovely form,
 Her tender age moves some, and some lament
 The fickleness of fortune ; every one 1185
 Is touched at heart by her courageous soul,
 Her scorn of death. She comes, by Pyrrhus led ;
 All wonder, tremble, pity ; when the hill
 Is reached, and on his father's grave advanced,
 The young king stands, the fearless maid shrinks
 not, 1190
 But waits unflinchingly the fatal blow.
 Her unquelled spirit moves the hearts of all ;
 And—a new prodigy—Pyrrhus is slow
 At slaughter ; but at length, with steady hand,
 He buries to the hilt the gleaming sword 1195
 Within her breast ; the life-blood gushes forth
 From the deep wound ; in death as heretofore
 Her soul is strong ; with angry thud she falls
 As she would make the earth a heavy load
 Upon Achilles' breast. Both armies weep ; 1200
 The Trojans venture only feeble moans ;
 The victors weep aloud : and thus was made
 The sacrifice. Her blood, upon the ground
 Once spilt, flowed not away, but eagerly
 The tomb absorbed and greedily sucked in 1205
 Each crimson drop.

Hecuba. Go, conquering Greeks,
 Securely seek your homes ; with all sail set,
 Your fleet may safely skim the longed-for sea.
 The lad and maid are dead, the war is done !
 Where can I hide my woe, where lay aside 1210
 The long delay of the slow-passing years ?
 Whom shall I weep ? my husband, grandson, child,
 Or country ? Mourn the living or the dead ?
 O longed-for death, with violence dost thou come
 To babes and maidens, but thou fleest from me ! 1215
 Through long night sought, mid fire, and swords, and
 spears,
 Why fly me ? Not the foe, nor ruined home,
 Nor flame could slay me, though so near I stood
 To Priam !

Messenger. [*Talthybius, coming from the Greek
 camp.*]

 Captive women, seek with speed
 The sea ; the sails are set, the vessels move. 1220



THE PHŒNICIAN WOMEN



DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

ŒDIPUS.

ETEOCLES.

POLYNICES.

ANTIGONE.

JOCASTA.

A THEBAN GUARD.

SCENE: *Thebes.*

THE PHŒNICIAN WOMEN

ACT I

SCENE I

Œdipus, Antigone.

Œdipus. O guide of thy blind father, only cheer
To one sore wearied, daughter well-beloved
Though got at such a heavy price, forsake
Thy wretched parent, wherefore shouldst thou lead
His wandering steps? O let him stumble on! 5
'Tis better I should find the way I seek,
Alone—the path that takes me out of life
And frees from sight of this crime-laden head
The earth and sky. How little have I done!
The daylight, conscious of my evil deeds, 10
I do not see, indeed; but I am seen!
O child, unclasp the hand that clings to mine,
Where'er my blind steps lead me let me roam.
I go, I go, where high Cithæron lifts
Its rugged summit, where Actæon swift, 15
Roaming among the rocks, was made a prey
By his own dogs; where through the shadowy groves
And dusky woodlands of the bosky vales
The mother, god-inspired, led forth her band,
And on her waving thyrsus lifted up 20
That head transfixed, rejoicing in ill deeds;

Where Zethus' bullock ran and dragged along
 The shattered body—on the bristling thorns
 Blood marked the course of the swift bullock's flight ;
 Or where with lofty summit Ino's cliff 25
 Rises beside the sea, where fleeing crime
 But finding crime the mother sought to drown
 Herself, her son, and leaped into the waves.
 Thrice happy he whose better fortune gave
 So good a mother! In these woods of ours 30
 There lies another place that calls to me,
 My footstep shall not falter, I will go
 Thither without a guide, why hesitate
 To take my rightful place? O give me death,
 Cithæron, give me back my former lodge, 35
 That where in infancy I should have died,
 There in my age I may breathe out my life.
 O ever savage, ruthless, cruel, fell,
 Whether thou slay or spare, long, long ago
 This lifeless trunk was due thee, now at last 40
 Fulfil my father's mandate, mother's will.
 My spirit longs to see accomplished now
 The deed so long delayed. Why hold me clasped
 With fatal love, my child? Why hold me so?
 My father calls, I follow! Follow thee! 45
 Yet spare! Behold where angry Laius comes,
 Bearing the bloodstained standard of the realm
 Snatched from him. With his hands he seeks to tear
 My eyeballs' empty sockets. Dost thou see
 My father, child? I see him! Now at last 50
 Spew out thy baneful life, O coward soul,
 Brave to destroy thy eyesight, not thyself!
 Leave off thy long atonements, weak delays!
 Why longer drag along thy life's slow length?

Why live? No crime remains for thee to do. 55

Ah, wretch! I here proclaim I still may sin!—

Go virgin, leave thy father; for her sake—

Thy mother's—fear I all.

Antigone.

No power on earth,

O father, can unknit my hand from thine,

And none shall ever snatch me from thy side. 60

My brothers may with drawn sword seek to gain

The opulent realm and th' illustrious home

Of Labdacus, but mine the better part.

Of all my father's realm—my father's self.

That brother who now holds in captured Thebes 65

The Theban scepter cannot take from me

This share, nor can that other who now leads

Argolic hosts; though Jupiter should speak

With thunderous voice out of the riven sky,

Although his bolt should fall to break our bond, 70

I will not let thee go. Though thou forbid,

Yet will I guide thee; though thou wish it not,

I will against thy will direct thy steps.

Seekst thou the plain? I go. The rugged heights?

I do not bar the way, but go before. 75

Whatever path thou treadst, make me thy guide,

We choose the selfsame road. Thou canst not die

Without me, with me thou mayst find thy death.

Here rises with steep sides the lofty cliff,

And views wide reaches of the sea that lies 80

Below, wilt thou go thither? There o'erhangs

The barren rock, there yawns the gaping jaws

Of the rent earth, shall I direct thee there?

There fall the hungry torrents, rolling down

The Sundered rocks from off the broken hills, 85

Shall we rush headlong in? Lo, I go first,

I go where'er thou wilt, I do not urge,
 I would not hinder. Father, wouldst thou cut
 Thy thread of life? Is death thy dearest wish?
 I go before thee if thou seekest death, 90
 I follow if thou live. Yet change thy mind,
 Call to thy aid thy will, so strong of old,
 With force heroic master thy distress,
 To die is to be conquered by thy woes,
 Oh, be courageous still.

Œdipus. From so base home 95
 Whence comes such noble growth? Whence comes
 this maid

So different from her race? Canst thou believe,
 O fate, that this is true? Has any good
 Been born of me? It never yet has been
 That fortune smiled on me except to harm. 100
 Nature obeys new laws; the streams, reversed,
 Bear back swift waters to their fountain-head,
 The torch of Phœbus ushers in the night,
 And Hesperus brings the day; that I may find
 Some increase of my woe, I, even I, 105
 Shall have a loyal child. In death alone
 Can Œdipus be safe. I may avenge
 My father, unavenged till now; why cease
 To mete out punishment, inert right hand?
 Whatever hitherto was measured out 110
 Was given for a mother. Dauntless maid,
 Let go thy father's hand, thou dost prolong
 My death; thy living father's funeral rites,
 Already all too long, thou lengthenest,
 Cover the hateful body with the earth. 115
 Thou errest, though with nobleness of aim,
 And deemst it loyalty to drag about

A father who lacks yet his burial rites.
 Who hinders one in haste to find his death
 Equals in guilt the one who forces death 120
 On one unwilling. Yet he equals not!
 The first I deem, indeed, the greater sin,
 I rather would be hurried to my end
 Than be from death's jaws snatched away. My child,
 No longer strive, in my own hands I hold 125
 The right to live or die: I laid aside
 Freely my sovereign power, but still retain
 Sovereignty o'er myself. If thou indeed
 Art loyal, give again thy father's sword,
 The sword with parent's slaughter infamous. 130
 Thou giv'st it? Do my children also hold
 This with the realm? Wherever there is need
 Of crime, there that should be; I give it up,
 My sons shall have it, yea both sons. Prepare
 The torches rather and a heap of wood; 135
 On the high funeral pyre I'll cast myself,
 Embrace the flames and 'neath the desolate pile
 Will hide this too firm heart; set free at last,
 Will give to ashes all that lives in me.
 Where is the pitiless sea? Where jutting crags 140
 O'erhang, where swift Ismenus' savage shoals
 Roll downward, lead me, if thou leader art.
 Where on the high cliff sat the Sphinx, half brute,
 Proposing riddles, there I'll go to die,
 Thither direct my steps, oh, place me there! 145
 Not empty should that baleful seat be left,
 Let it be by the greater monster filled.
 There sitting on the rocks I will propose
 The riddle of our fortune none can solve.
 Whoe'er thou art who plow'st th' Assyrian fields, 150

Whoe'er, a suppliant, offerest up thy prayers
 Where dwelt the far-famed dragon, ye who drink
 Eurotas or inhabit Sparta, famed
 For the twin brothers, husbandmen who reap
 Elis, Parnassus, and the fertile fields 155
 Of rich Bœotia, listen ; what like this
 Could she propose—Thebes' savage curse who wove
 Dark, baneful riddles? What so hard to loose?
 His father's father's son-in-law, yet found
 His father's rival, brother to his sons, 160
 And father of his brothers ; at one birth
 The father's mother bore the husband sons,
 And grandsons to herself. Who can search out
 This prodigy? I, even I, who bore
 The trophies from the conquered Sphinx, perplexed, 165
 Am slow to read my riddle. Why waste words?
 Why strive with prayers to soften my hard heart?
 Fixed is my purpose to pour out this life,
 Too long with death contending, and to seek
 The land of shadows, for the blackest night 170
 Is all too little for this crime of mine.
 Hide me in Tartarus, or if beyond
 Aught lies, there hide me ; what I should have done
 Long since, I now will do. It cannot be
 Death is forbidden. Wilt thou keep the sword? 175
 Wilt thou close up the way that leads to death,
 Nor grant a halter? Wilt thou take away
 Poisonous herbs? What profits all thy care?
 In every place is death, most graciously
 God ordered this ; one may destroy man's life, 180
 But none can snatch death from him, countless gates
 'To this lie open. I have need of nought,
 Wont am I to employ my brave right hand.

Come, hand, with all thy force, with all thy guile,
With all thy strength ; I purpose not to wound 185
One place alone, I am all black with sin,
Deal death in whatsoever part thou wilt.
Lay wide the bosom, tear away the heart
So filled with crime, the inmost parts lay bare,
Let my weak throat sound with redoubled blows, 190
And let my veins, by wounding nails torn through,
Bleed ; or where thou art wont direct thy wrath :
Open again these wounds, with putrid gore
Wet them, and drag this unsubdued, hard heart
By this gate forth. O father, wheresoe'er 195
Thou mayst be found, judge of my penalty,
I have not thought by any punishment
Ever to fully expiate my sin ;
I was not satisfied with death alone,
I have not paid my ransom with my eyes, 200
I wished to perish for thee limb by limb,
At length exact the penalty I owe.
Now I atone, 'twas then but sacrifice
I offered ; oh, be present, inward urge
My feeble hand ; oh, plunge it deeper still ! 205
A timid, slight libation then I poured,
Hardly drew forth the eyes that eagerly
Followed my hand. My spirit even now
Falters, is loth with trembling hand to tear
These sockets. Œdipus, be brave indeed, 210
Less bold than thou hast purposed thou hast been,
In plucking out thine eyes ; deep in thy brain
Bury thy hand, and perfect thou the death
Where I began to die.

Antigone. I pray thee show
Some pity, great-souled father ; calmly hear 215

Thy daughter's words. I would not lead thee back
 To the old home, nor to the kingly throne
 With all its splendor, would not have thee bear
 With weak, untroubled breast the wrath of God
 Which time has not yet softened, but 'tis meet 220
 So strong a man should not be crushed by grief,
 Or fly, o'ercome by manifold distress.
 It is not, father, as thou deemst it, brave
 To be afraid of life ; 'tis brave to face
 The greatest ills, nor flinch, nor turn the back. 225
 He who has trampled on his destiny,
 He who has rent life's good and cast it by,
 And made his own life heavier, who has need
 No more of God, why should he wish to die?
 Why seek his death? Either were cowardly. 230
 No one who longs for death despises it.
 The man whose evil fate is at its worst
 Is safe. Although he would, what god could make
 Thy trouble heavier? Nor canst thou thyself
 Unless in deeming thou art worthy death. 235
 Thou art not, for no sin has touched thy heart.
 Thou canst more surely call thyself guilt free,
 Since thou art innocent although the gods
 Willed otherwise. What maddens thee? What adds
 New stings to misery? What urges thee 240
 Into the land of death? What drives thee hence?
 Wouldst thou shun day? Thou hast. Or wouldst
 thou flee
 Thy lofty palace and thy native land?
 For thee, although thou livest, native land
 Is dead. Or wouldst thou fly thy mother, sons? 245
 Fate has removed thee from the sight of these.
 What death from others takes, life takes from thee.

The tumult of the throne? At thy command
 The press of crowding fortune fell away.
 What wouldst thou fly, my father?

Œdipus.

Ah! My self! 250

I flee a bosom conscious of all crimes,
 I flee this hand, this sky, I flee the gods.
 Do I yet touch the earth where Ceres grows
 Fruitful and fair? With noxious life still breathe
 The vital air? or satisfy my thirst 255
 With water? or enjoy in any way
 The gifts of mother Nature? Base, defiled,
 Detestable, do I yet feel the touch
 Of thy pure hand? or can I yet perceive
 Voices which speak the names of father, son? 260
 Oh, could I with destroying hand throw wide
 Those paths where enter sound! Might I destroy
 These narrow pathways for the human voice!
 O child, thy wretched father would have fled
 Long, long ago, the knowledge that thou art, 265
 Thou, part of my great sin. My crimes stick fast,
 Repeated o'er and o'er. O eyes and ears,
 Let all ye gave me pass away from me!
 O'erwhelmed with blackest shadows, why not go
 Into the everlasting shades of Dis? 270
 Why keep my spirit here? Why weight the world?
 Why wander yet among the souls that live?
 What crime is left? Realm, parents, children, all,
 Valor, the glory of sagacious mind,
 Have perished; fate has taken from me all. 275
 Tears still were left, these from myself I snatched.
 Go, for my soul will listen to no prayers,
 New penalties and equal to my crimes
 I seek. Yet what can ever equal those?

I was condemned to death in infancy, 280
 Who ever drew so bad a lot? ere yet
 I saw the light, ere from my mother's womb
 I was set free, already I was feared!
 Night seizes many, just when they are born,
 And carries them away from the new day; 285
 Death found me even ere I saw the light.
 Some meet an early death within the womb,
 But have they also sinned? Still hidden close,
 Secreted in the womb, not knowing yet
 That I should be the doer of great crimes, 290
 A god impelled; my father at his word
 Condemned me, pierced with steel my tender feet,
 And left me in the forest, food for beasts
 And savage birds (oft wet with blood of kings)
 Which dark Cithæron breeds. Yet whom the gods 295
 Sentenced, and whom a father cast away,
 Death also fled. I have fulfilled the word
 Spoken at Delphos: I attacked and slew
 My father. This might be by love made good.
 My father I have slain, but I have loved 300
 My mother—of our marriage torch to speak
 Is loathsome, yet against my will I'll pay
 This penalty, will tell the beastly crime,
 Unheard-of, strange, at thought of which men shrink,
 The crime which makes ashamed the man who slew 305
 His father. This right hand, with father's blood
 Made wet, even to my father's marriage bed
 I took, and found sin's wages—greater sin.
 My father's murder was a slight offence
 Compared with this. Lest all too small should be 310
 My guilt, my mother in my marriage bed
 Was made a mother. Nature cannot yield

A greater crime than this, but should there be
 A greater, those to whom 'twere possible
 Have been by me created. From my hand 315
 I cast aside the patricide's reward,
 The scepter, with it armed another hand.
 I knew right well my kingdom's destiny,
 Without the sacrifice of sacred blood
 No man can hold it. Nameless ills to come 320
 My father heart presages. Seeds are sown
 Of future slaughter. He who holds the realm
 Will not resign it, he who wishes it
 Calls upon justice and the gods who see
 The violated pact ; exiled, he moves 325
 Argos and all the cities of the Greeks
 To arms ; destruction comes to wretched Thebes ;
 The flying spear, flames, slaughter 'gainst her rise,
 And greater ills, if greater ills there be,
 That none may doubt I have begotten sons. 330

Antigone. If thou no other reason hadst to live,
 This were enough : that thou shouldst fatherlike
 Control thy maddened sons, thou canst avert,
 And thou alone, the threats of impious war,
 Thou only canst restrain those youths insane, 335
 Give to the people peace, to Thebes repose,
 And, to the broken compact, faith renewed.
 If thou thyself shouldst to thyself refuse
 The right to live, thou tak'st from many more
 The right of life.

Edipus. For empire and for blood. 340
 For war and treachery athirst, base, vile,
 In short my own, can these or can their like
 Feel filial love ? They joy in doing ill,
 And deem nought sacred when rage drives them forth,

Those base born ones consider nothing base, 345
Their wretched father's shame affects them not,
Nor does their native country, they are mad
For sovereignty; whither they tend I know,
How much they strive to do; therefore I seek
A speedy way of death, make haste to die 350
While none is guiltier in my house than I.
Why, daughter, dost thou weep and clasp my knees?
Why strive with prayers to guide my untamed heart?
Elsewhere invulnerable, here alone
Can fortune wound me, thou alone canst warm 355
My frozen love, in all our house but thou
Canst teach me goodness. Nought to me is hard
Or grievous if I know it is thy wish.
If thou shouldst bid him, Œdipus would cross
Th' Ægean straits, would take between his lips 360
The flame earth belches from Sicilia's mount,
Would cast himself before the fiery snake
That rages for the fruit that Hercules
Stole from the grove, at thy command he'd bare
His bosom to the birds, at thy command 365
Would live.

ACT II

Œdipus, Antigone, Messenger.

Messenger. O noble scion of a royal stock,
Thebes, trembling at the brothers' hostile arms,
Invokes thee, prays that thou wouldst turn aside
The torch of war that threatens thy father's land. 370
Nor threats alone, the danger nearer comes.
A brother claims the promised interchange
Of royal power, into war would force
The Grecian cities, seven camps invest
The walls of Thebes. Make haste to bring her aid, 375
Prevent at once impiety and war.

Œdipus. Am I the man should put an end to crime.
Or teach the hand to keep itself unstained
With blood of kindred? Have I learned the laws
Of justice and of duteous love? They seek 380
To follow the example of my crimes,
Gladly I recognize and praise their deed,
Exhort them do some action worthy me.
Dear offspring, forward! prove your noble birth
By deeds, surpass my glory and my fame, 385
Do something that shall make thy father glad
That he has lived till now! I know you will,
Your ancestry assures me that you will,
Such greatness cannot with poor, common crimes
Content itself. Bring weapons, cast the torch 390
Into the sacred temples of the gods,

Mow down with flames thy native country's grain,
 Throw all into disorder, ruin all,
 Destroy the city walls, and to the dust
 Level the city, with their shrines destroy 395
 The great divinities, and bring to nought
 The household gods become so infamous,
 Burn up the city, lay thy whole house low,
 And to my marriage bed put first the torch.

Antigone. Thy passionate, wild sorrow put aside ; 400
 The public sorrow urges thee to be
 The bringer of sweet peace between thy sons.

Edipus. Thinkst thou thou seest here a meek old
 man,
 And that thou callest to aid thee one who loves
 Sweet peace? This heart of mine with wrath is
 swelled, 405

Rage burns within me, greater war I seek
 Than aught that destiny or youth desires.
 I am not satisfied with cruel war,
 Brother with brother wars—'tis not enough.
 Crimes that are due, crimes that are like my own, 410
 Crimes that become our bed,—let these be done.
 Give weapons to the mother. From the woods
 No one shall drag me, in the hollow cliffs
 I'll lurk, or in dense thickets hide myself,
 There will I wait on wandering Rumor's words, 415
 And hear whate'er I can of brothers' war.

ACT III

SCENE I

Jocasta.

Happy Agave! The wild crime she did,
She herself bore; a blood-stained bacchanal,
She carried forth the dreadful spoil, her son
Dismembered; guilt was hers, yet nought of crime 420
Beyond her own great sin was brought to pass.
'Tis light to bear the burdens of the crimes
Myself have done. I have made others sin;
This also, even this is light to bear.
I have brought forth the guilty, to my woes 425
This bitterness still lacked—that I should love
An enemy. Three times the winter snows
Have fallen and three times the summer grain
Before the bending sickle been laid low,
Since, of his land deprived, my son has roamed 430
An exile, and, a fugitive, has craved
Aid from the Grecian kings. He has become
Adrastes' son-in-law—that king who rules
The waters the Corinthian Isthmus cuts,
Who now to aid his son-in-law leads forth 435
His hosts, and with him seven other kings.
I know not what I ought to wish or think;
He claims the kingdom, reason good he has
For claiming, yet he seeks it by ill means.

Alas, whose part shall I, the mother, take? 440
 Each is my son, I cannot safely show
 My love for either. If I wish one well
 I wish the other ill. With equal love
 I love them both, and yet my spirit yearns,
 Favoring still the weakest, toward the son 445
 Whose lot is heaviest though his cause is just.
 His evil fortune binds me to his side.

SCENE II

Antigone, Jocasta, A Theban Guard.

Theban Guard. Queen, while in weeping and in
 wild lament

Thou wastest time, the battle line is here,
 Drawn up in open war, the trumpet calls 450
 To arms, th' advancing eagle calls to war.
 Drawn up in serried ranks the kings prepare
 Seven battle fields, and Cadmus' sons go forth
 With equal courage, swiftly here and there
 The soldiers rush; see how black clouds of dust 455
 Obscure the day, there rises from the field
 Clouds dark as smoke, raised by the hurrying feet
 Of horsemen and, if those who fear see true,
 The hostile standards shine, the foe's first ranks
 Are present, and the golden banners bear 460
 Illustrious names of well-known generals.
 Go, to the brothers bring fraternal love,
 Give peace to all and with a mother's voice
 Forbid the war.

Antigone. Haste, mother, haste, fly fast,
 Hold back the weapons, from the brothers' hands 465

Strike down the sword, between the hostile spears
 Set thy brave breast, O mother, stop the war,
 Or perish first.

Jocasta. I go, I go, my head
 I'll offer to their swords, between the swords
 I'll stand. and he who would his brother slay 470
 Must slay his mother first. At my request
 The duteous son will lay his weapon down,
 The son who is not duteous shall begin
 His war with me; though old, I may restrain
 The fiery youths, no impious crime shall be 475
 While I am witness, or if impious crime
 Can be committed and I witness it,
 One crime were not enough.

Antigonc. The fight is on,
 The neighboring banners gleam, the noise of war
 Resounds, O mother, now employ thy prayers. 480
 But see, as though prevailed on by thy tears,
 Slowly, with spears at rest, the line draws near.

Theban Guard. The line moves slowly, but the
 leaders haste.

Jocasta. What winged wind will sweep me through
 the air,
 With the mad rushing of the tempest driven? 485
 Would that the Sphinx or the Stymphalian birds
 That darken like a heavy cloud the day
 Would bear me swiftly on their eager wings!
 Or that the harpies, seeing the fierce rage
 Of the two cruel kings, would snatch me hence 490
 And cast me down between the battle lines.

Theban Guard. Like one insane she moves, she's
 mad, indeed!
 As the swift Parthian arrow from the bow

Is driven, as the raft is swept along
By the wild winds, or as a falling star 495
Drops from the skies, when with swift fires it breaks
A path unswerving, so her maddened flight
She takes, and stands between the hostile lines.
The fight a moment fails, compelled to yield
Before a mother's prayers, on either side 500
The warriors, eager to begin the work
Of mutual slaughter, in their right hands hold
The weapons poised, but motionless as yet
Both armies stand, at peace. The swords of all
Are sunk to earth, or hidden in the sheath, 505
Only the brothers' hands still brandish them.
The mother shows her loose hair, white and torn ;
She supplicates, but they deny ; she wets
Their knees with tears—who hesitates so long
Can in the end deny a mother's prayers. 510

ACT IV

SCENE I

Polynices, Eteocles, Jocasta, The Two Armies.

Jocasta. Against me turn your weapons and your
fires,

Attack me only, valorous youths who come
From Argive cities ; and ye warriors fierce,
Who from the Theban citadel descend,
Fall upon me alone. Let friend and foe 515
Alike attack this womb, which bore these sons—
My husband's brothers. Tear these limbs apart,
Scatter them far and wide. I bore you both.
Do you more quickly lay aside the sword ?
And shall I say who fathered you, my sons ? 520
Give me your hands, give them while yet unstained ;
Till now ye have unwittingly done wrong,
Each crime was fortune's that against us sinned,
This is the first base act brought forth between
Those conscious of their guilt. In my hand lies 525
Whate'er you will : if holy piety
Be pleasing to you, give your mother peace ;
If crime be pleasing, greater is prepared,
A mother stands between you, make an end
Of war or of the hinderer of war. 530
Whom with alternate prayers and anxious words
Shall I first strive to touch, whom first embrace ?
With equal love am I to each one drawn.

One was far off—but if the brother's pact
 Should hold, the other soon would be far off. 535
 Shall I then never see the two at once
 Except as now? Embrace me first, my son,
 Who hast endured misfortunes manifold
 And labors manifold, and now, foredone
 By a long exile, dost at last behold 540
 Thy mother. Nearer draw, within its sheath
 Put up thy impious sword, and in the earth
 Bury thy spear that trembles, poised to slay.
 Thy shield prevents thy breast from meeting mine,
 Lay it aside; loose from thy brow the bands 545
 And from its warlike covering free thy head,
 That I may see thy face. Where dost thou look?
 Dost thou observe thy brother's battle line
 With timid glance? I'll hide thee in my arms,
 Through me must be the pathway to thy blood. 550
 Why hesitate? Art thou afraid to trust
 Thy mother?

Polynices. Yea, I am afraid. No more
 Do nature's laws avail. Since I have known
 A mother's precedent, I cannot trust
 Even a mother's promise.

Jocasta. Put again 555
 Thy hand upon thy sword, bind on once more
 Thy helmet, take thy shield, retain thy arms
 Until thy brother shall have been disarmed.
 Thou who first used the sword, put by the sword.
 If peace is odious, if thou seekest war 560
 Thy mother asks thee for a short delay
 That she may kiss the son from flight returned,
 Whether it be the first kiss or the last.
 Listen unarmed while I entreat for peace.

Thou fearest him, he thee? I fear thee both, 565
 But for the sake of each. Why wilt thou not
 Lay by the sword? Be glad at these delays:
 You seek to wage a war in which 'twere best
 To be o'ercome. Thy hostile brother's guile
 Fearest thou? 'tis often needful to deceive 570
 Or be oneself deceived, yet is it best
 To suffer rather than commit a crime.
 Fear not, a treacherous thrust from either side
 Thy mother will receive. Do I prevail?
 Shall I be envious of thy father's fate? 575
 Have I come hither to prevent a crime,
 Or see it nearer? See, he sheathes his sword,
 He drops his spear, he lays aside his arms;
 And now to thee thy mother turns with prayers
 And tears, I see again thy face, long sought. 580
 Thee, from thy native land a fugitive,
 A foreign king's penates long kept safe.
 By divers seas and by a changeful fate
 Thou hast been driven. Followed by her train,
 Thy mother did not to thy marriage bed 585
 Conduct thee, nor adorn the festal halls
 Herself, nor with the sacred fillets bind
 The happy torches, thy bride's father gave
 No gift of gold, a treasure for a king,
 Nor fields, nor towns; thy bridal gift is war. 590
 Thou of a foe art made the son-in-law,
 Far from thy land, the guest of alien laws,
 Sought by a stranger, driven from thine own,
 An exile through no crime that thou hast done.
 Lest thou shouldst taste not all thy parents' fate, 595
 This too thou hadst from them: to wed amiss.
 O son, sent back to me from many lands;

O son, thy anxious mother's hope and fear ;
 For whose return I often prayed the gods,
 Though thy return would snatch away as much 600
 As it would give ; how long, I asked, how long,
 Before I cease to fear on his account ?
 The mocking god replied, till thou shalt fear
 Himself. Thou hadst been far, but for this war ;
 Hadst thou been far I should have known no war. 605
 The sight of thee is given at a price
 Heavy to pay, but to thy mother's eyes
 The sight is welcome. Now, ere cruel Mars
 Dares some dread crime, let the two hosts withdraw ;
 Great sin it is that they have come so near. 610
 I am amazed, I shudder, when I see
 Two brothers stand so near the edge of crime.
 My limbs are weak, how nearly had I seen
 A crime of greater infamy than aught
 Thy wretched father ever looked upon. 615
 I am set free from fear of such a crime,
 Such now I shall not see ; and yet I feel
 Unhappy that so nearly I have seen.
 Oh ! by the ten months' labor of my womb,
 And by thy noble sister's piety, 620
 And by thy father's eyes which he dragged forth,
 Enraged against himself and from himself
 Exacting the hard penalty of crime,
 Though innocent of any guilt ; I pray :
 Save from the cursed torch thy country's walls, 625
 Turn back the standards of the hostile lines ;
 Though thou turnst back, great portion of thy crime
 Already is complete—thy land has seen
 Its open plains o'errun by hordes of foes,
 Has seen afar the shining troops, has seen 630

The Cadmean meadows trampled by the horse,
And princes in their chariots of war
Advancing, and the blaze of lighted beams
Prepared to burn our homes, and—even for Thebes
An unaccustomed crime—two brothers roused 635
To war against each other. All the host
Saw, the whole people saw, thy sister saw,
And I, thy mother. That he saw it not,
Thy father to his mangled eyeballs owes.
Ah, what if Œdipus should see thee now, 640
That judge who even for error would exact
The penalty? O waste not with the sword
Thy country and thy home, nor overthrow
The Thebes thou so desirest to rule.
What madness has possession of thy mind? 645
Wilt thou by wild assault destroy the land?
That it may be thine own wouldst make it nought?
Thou dost but to thine own cause injury,
When thou inflam'st thy land with hostile arms,
Layest the ripe grain low, and far and wide 650
Spreadst terror. None thus devastate their own.
Thou must believe it but an alien land,
Which thou commandest to be seized by fire
And taken by the sword. Decide which one
Shall be the king, but let the kingdom stand. 655
Wilt thou with fire and spear destroy these roofs?
Or canst thou shake Amphion's mighty work?
Wouldst shake these walls, not builded by man's hand
That lifts with noisy crane the slow moved weight,
But called together by the cithers' sound 660
And singing—of themselves the stones moved up
Into the highest turrets—wouldst thou break
These walls in pieces? Wouldst thou bear away

A victor's spoil, thy father's vanquished peers
 Lead hence, and shall the cruel soldiers drag 665
 Mothers in chains, snatched from their husband's arms?
 Shall Theban maidens, mingled with the herd
 Of captives, go as gifts to Argive maids?
 Shall I myself, with hands behind me bound,
 The plunder of fraternal triumph be? 670
 Canst thou behold thy fellow citizens
 On all sides given o'er to death and flight?
 Canst thou against these dear walls lead the foe?
 Hast thou a heart so savage and so wild,
 So cruel in its wrath? Thou art not yet 675
 A king, what will thy sceptered hand perform?
 I do beseech thee, put aside thy rage
 And swelling anger, give to duteous love
 Again thy heart.

Polynices. That I a fugitive
 May wander? That I may afar from Thebes 680
 Be kept? May ever as a guest desire
 The aid of strangers? Had I broken faith,
 Had I foresworn myself, what had I borne?
 Shall I to aliens pay the penalty
 Of treachery, and he alone enjoy 685
 The profit of the crime? Thou bidst me go,
 I would indeed obey a mother's word;
 Where shall I go? My royal halls would be
 My haughty brother's dwelling, a poor hut
 Would cover me: give to the exiled that, 690
 Let me exchange a realm for that poor home.
 But shall I, given to my wife, a slave,
 Bear the harsh judgments of a wealthy bride
 And as a mean and humble follower
 Obey the royal parents of my wife? 695

'Tis hard to fall from power to servitude.

Jocasta. If thou desirest to be a king
 Nor canst from the harsh scepter free thy hand,
 Many there are in the world's circle wide
 That thou canst seize. Where Tmolus lifts its heights
 Sacred to Bacchus, where wide stretches lie 701
 Of fruitful soil, where rich Pactolus flows
 And inundates the country with its gold.
 Nor does Mæander with its wandering stream
 Through meadowlands less happy wind its way ; 705
 Swift Hermus rolls through fertile fields ; there lies
 Gargara, loved by Ceres, and the land
 Which Zanthus, swoll'n with Ida's snows, makes wet ;
 There lies the shore where the Ionian sea
 Changes its name, across the narrow strait, 710
 Opposite to Abydos, Sestos stands ;
 Or, farther east, with safe and frequent ports,
 Lies Lycia : seek these kingdoms with the sword,
 Let thy bride's father bear his hostile arms
 Against these peoples, and betray these lands, 715
 And give them to thee to be ruled by thee.
 Think that thy father hitherto has held
 This kingdom. Better far for thee would be
 Exile than this return. Exiled thou art 719
 Through guilt not thine ; through crime thyself must do
 Thou wilt return. 'Twere better thou shouldst seek
 With these thy warriors a new realm, unstained
 By any crime. The sharer of thy war,
 Thy brother, will himself then fight for thee
 Go wage a war where we may wish thee well. 725
 A kingdom won by crime is heavier far
 Than any exile. Weigh the ills of war,
 Think on uncertain Mars' vicissitudes.

Though thou shouldst lead with thee the flower of
Greece,

Though far and wide thy countless hosts should spread,
Yet doubtful were the fortune of the war— 731

'Tis as Mars wills, he makes of equal strength
Two swords, although they were before ill matched,
Blind chance brings hope or fear. Though all the gods
Favored thy vows, they have withdrawn from thee 735
And, put to flight, have sought the Theban side,
The soldiery, in awful overthrow

Lying, are scattered over all the field.

Say thou wage war, from thy slain brother bear
A victor's spoils, thy palms would soon be crushed; 740
Thinkst thou such war can bring the conqueror joy
When he commits in it accursed crime?

Him whom thou seekest now to overthrow,
Him, conquered, wretched one, thou wilt bewail.
Go, put an end to this disastrous war, 745
From terror free thy native land, from grief
Set free thy parents.

Polynices. Shall no punishment
For all his crime and treachery be borne
By my base brother?

Jocasta. Fear not. He shall pay
Hard penalty indeed, for he shall reign, 750
This is his penalty. And shouldst thou doubt,
Look on his father's, his grandfather's fate;
Cadmus and Cadmus' offspring tell thee this:
Never unpunished did a Theban hold
The scepter, none shall hold it who break faith, 755
And even now among such sinful ones
Thou numberest a brother.

Eteocles. Be it so!

'Tis worth so much to be among Thebes' kings.
Thee, place I mid the throng of exiled ones.

Jocasta. Reign hated by the people.

Eteocles. He who fears 760

Hatred can never wish to be a king.

God, the creator of the universe,

Has bound together hate and kingly power.

A great king, I believe, will overcome

Hatred itself. Their peoples' love prevents 765

Many from ruling; most is possible

Where hate abides. Who wishes to be loved

Rules with a languid hand.

Jocasta. Not long maintained

Will be unwelcome empire.

Eteocles. Kings may give

The laws of empire with a better grace, 770

Speak thou of exiles. For my realm I wish—

Jocasta. To give thy native land, thy household
gods,

Thy wife, to the destroying flames?

Eteocles. Hard price

Is ever for imperial power paid.





MEDEA

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

JASON.

CREON.

MEDEA.

NURSE.

MESSENGER.

CHORUS OF CORINTHIAN WOMEN.

SCENE: *Corinth.*

MEDEA

ACT I

SCENE I

Medea. [*Alone.*] Ye gods of marriage ;
Lucina, guardian of the genial bed ;
Pallas, who taught the tamer of the seas
To steer the Argo ; stormy ocean's lord ;
Titan, dividing bright day to the world ; 5
And thou three-formed Hecate, who dost shed
Thy conscious splendor on the hidden rites !
Ye by whom Jason plighted me his troth ;
And ye Medea rather should invoke :
Chaos of night eternal ; realm opposed 10
To the celestial powers ; abandoned souls ;
King of the dusky realm ; Persephone,
By better faith betrayed ; you I invoke,
But with no happy voice. Approach, approach,
Avenging goddesses with snaky hair, 15
Holding in blood-stained hands your sulphurous torch !
Come now as horrible as when of yore
Ye stood beside my marriage-bed ; bring death
To the new bride, and to the royal seed,
And Creon ; worse for Jason I would ask— 20
Life ! Let him roam in fear through unknown lands,
An exile, hated, poor, without a home ;

A guest now too well known, let him, in vain,
 Seek alien doors, and long for me, his wife!
 And, yet a last revenge, let him beget 25
 Sons like their father, daughters like their mother!
 'Tis done; revenge is even now brought forth—
 I have borne sons to Jason. I complain
 Vainly, and cry aloud with useless words,
 Why do I not attack mine enemies? 30
 I will strike down the torches from their hands,
 The light from heaven. Does the sun see this,
 The author of our race, and still give light?
 And, sitting in his chariot, does he still
 Run through the accustomed spaces of the sky, 35
 Nor turn again to seek his rising place,
 And measure back the day? Give me the reins;
 Father, let me in thy paternal car
 Be borne aloft the winds, and let me curb
 With glowing bridle those thy fiery steeds! 40
 Burn Corinth; let the parted seas be joined!
 This still remains—for me to carry up
 The marriage torches to the bridal room,
 And, after sacrificial prayers, to slay
 The victims on their altars. Seek, my soul— 45
 If thou still livest, or if aught endures
 Of ancient vigor—seek to find revenge
 Through thine own bowels; throw off woman's fears,
 Intrench thyself in snowy Caucasus.
 All impious deeds Phasis or Pontus saw, 50
 Corinth shall see. Evils unknown and wild,
 Hideous, frightful both to earth and heaven,
 Disturb my soul,—wounds, and the scattered corpse,
 And murder. I remember gentle deeds,
 A maid did these; let heavier anguish come, 55

Since sterner crimes befit me now, a wife!
 Gird thee with wrath, prepare thine utmost rage,
 That fame of thy divorce may spread as far
 As of thy marriage! Make no long delay. 59
 How dost thou leave thy husband? As thou cam'st.
 Homes crime built up, by crime must be dissolved.

SCENE II

*Enter Chorus of Corinthian women, singing the
 marriage song of Jason and Creusa.*

Chorus. Be present at the royal marriage feast,
 Ye gods who sway the scepter of the deep,
 And ye who hold dominion in the heavens;
 With the glad people come, ye smiling gods! 65
 First to the scepter-bearing thunderers
 The white-backed bull shall stoop his lofty head;
 The snowy heifer, knowing not the yoke,
 Is due to fair Lucina; and to her
 Who stays the bloody hand of Mars, and gives 70
 To warring nations peace, who in her horn
 Holds plenty, sacrifice a victim mild.
 Thou who at lawful bridals dost preside,
 Scattering darkness with thy happy torch,
 Come hither with slow step, dizzy with wine, 75
 Binding thy temples with a rosy crown.
 Thou star that bringest in the day and night,
 Slow-rising on the lover, ardently
 For thy clear shining maids and matrons long.
 In comeliness the virgin bride excels 80
 The Athenian women and the strong-limbed maids
 Of Sparta's unwall'd town, who on the top

Of high Taygetus try youthful sports ;
 Or those who in the clear Aonian stream,
 Or in Alpheus' sacred waters bathe. 85
 The child of the wild thunder, he who tames
 And fits the yoke to tigers, is less fair
 Than the Ausonian prince. The glorious god
 Who moves the tripod, Dian's brother mild ;
 The skilful boxer Pollux ; Castor, too, 90
 Must yield the palm to Jason. O ye gods
 Who dwell in heaven, ever may the bride
 Surpass all women, he excel all men !

Before her beauty in the women's choir
 The beauty of the other maids grows dim ; 95
 So with the sunrise pales the light of stars,
 So when the moon with brightness not her own
 Fills out her crescent horns, the Pleiads fade.
 Her cheeks blush like white cloth 'neath Tyrian dyes,
 Or as the shepherd sees the light of stars 100
 Grow rosy with the dawn. O happy one,
 Accustomed once to clasp unwillingly
 A wife unloved and reckless, snatched away
 From that dread Colchian marriage, take thy bride,
 The Æolian virgin—'tis her father's will. 105

Bright offspring of the thyrsus-bearing god,
 The time has come to light the torch of pine ;
 With fingers dripping wine flash out the fires,
 Sound the gay music of the marriage song,
 Let the crowd pass their jests ; 'tis only she 110
 Who fled her home to wed a stranger guest,
 Need steal away into the silent dark.

ACT II

SCENE I

Medea, Nurse.

Medea. Alas, the wedding chorus strikes my ears ;
Woe, woe to me ! I could not hitherto
Believe—can hardly yet believe such wrong. 115
And this is Jason's deed ? Of father, home,
And kingdom reft, can he desert me now,
Alone and in a foreign land ? Can he
Despise my worth who saw the flames and seas
By my art conquered ? thinks, perchance, all crime
Exhausted ! Tossed by every wave of doubt, 121
I am distracted, seeking some revenge.
Had he a brother ! Ah, he has a bride ;
Through her be thrust the steel ! Is this enough ?
If Grecian or barbarian cities know 125
Crime that this hand knows not, that crime be done !
Thy sins return to mind exhorting thee :
The stolen treasure of a kingdom, too ;
Thy little comrade, wicked maid, destroyed,
Torn limb from limb and scattered on the sea 130
An offering to his father ; Pelias old
Killed in the boiling cauldron. I have shed
Blood basely, but not yet, not yet have shown
The power of wrath, unhappy love did all.
Had Jason any choice, by foreign law 135

And foreign power constrained? He should have
bared

His breast to feel the sword. O bitter grief,
Speak milder, milder words. Let Jason live ;
Mine as he was, if this be possible,
But, if not mine, still let him live secure, 140
To spare me still the memory of my gift !
The fault is Creon's ; he abuses power
To annul our marriage, sever strongest ties,
And tear the children from their mother's breast ;
Let Creon pay the penalty he owes. 145
I'll heap his home in ashes, the dark flame
Shall reach Malea's dreaded cape, where ships
Find passage only after long delay.

Nurse. Be silent, I implore thee, hide thy pain
Deep in thy bosom. He who silently 150
Bears grievous wounds, with patience, and a mind
Unshaken, may find vengeance. Hidden wrath
Finds strength, when open hatred loses hope
Of vengeance.

Medea. Light is grief that hides itself,
And can take counsel. Great wrongs lie not hid. 155
I am resolved on action.

Nurse. Foster-child,
Restrain thy fury ; hardly art thou safe
Though silent.

Medea. Fortune tramples on the meek,
But fears the brave.

Nurse. When courage is in place
It wins approval.

Medea. It can never be 160
That courage should be out of place.

Nurse. To thee,

In thy misfortune, hope points out no way.

Medea. ~~The man who cannot hope should naught
despair.~~

Nurse. Colchis is far away, thy husband lost ;
Of all thy riches nothing now remains. 165

Medea. ~~Medea now remains!~~ Land, sea, sword,
fire,

God and the thunderbolt, are found in me.

Nurse. The king is to be feared.

Medea. I claim a king
For father.

Nurse. Hast thou then no fear of arms ?

Medea. I, who saw warriors spring from earth ?

Nurse. Thou'lt die ! 170

Medea. I wish it.

Nurse. Flee !

Medea. Nay, I repent of flight.

Nurse. Thou art a mother.

Medea. And thou seest by whom.

Nurse. Wilt thou not fly ?

Medea. I fly, but first revenge.

Nurse. Vengeance may follow thee.

Medea. I may, perchance,
Find means to hinder it.

Nurse. Restrain thyself 175

And cease to threaten madly ; it is well
That thou adjust thyself to fortune's change.

Medea. My riches, not my spirit, fortune takes.
The hinge creaks,—who is this ? Creon himself,
Swelling with Grecian pride. 180

SCENE II

Creon with Attendants, Medea.

Creon. What, is Medea of the hated race
Of Colchian Æëtes, not yet gone?
Still she is plotting evil; well I know
Her guile, and well I know her cruel hand.
Whom does she spare, or whom let rest secure? 185
Verily I had thought to cut her off
With the swift sword, but Jason's prayers availed
To spare her life. She may go forth unharmed
If she will set our city free from fear.
Threatening and fierce, she seeks to speak with us; 190
Attendants, keep her off, bid her be still,
And let her learn at last, a king's commands
Must be obeyed. Go, haste, and take her hence.

Medea. What fault is punished by my banishment?

Creon. A woman, innocent, doth ask, 'What
fault?' 195

Medea. If thou wilt judge, examine; or if king,
Command.

Creon. Unjust or just, a king must be
Obeyed.

Medea. An unjust king not long endures.

Creon. Go! 'Plain to Colchis!

Medea. Willingly I go;
Let him who brought me hither take me hence. 200

Creon. Thy words come late, my edict has gone
forth.

Medea. The man who judges, one side still un-
heard,
Were hardly a just judge, though he judge justly.

Creon. Pelias for listening to thee died, but speak,
Let me give time to hear so fair a plea. 205

Medea. How hard it is to calm a wrathful soul,
How he who takes the scepter in proud hands
Deems his own will sufficient, I have learned ;
Have learned it in my father's royal house.
For though the sport of fortune, suppliant, 210
Banished, alone, forsaken, on all sides
Distressed, my father was a noble king.
I am descended from the glorious sun.
What lands the Phasis in its winding course
Bathes, or the Euxine touches where the sea 215
Is freshened by the water from the lakes,
Or where armed maiden cohorts try their skill
Beside Thermodon, all these lands are held
Within my father's kingdom, where I dwelt
Noble and favored, and with princely power. 220
He whom kings seek, sought then to wed with me.
Swift, fickle fortune cast me headlong forth,
And gave me exile. Put thy trust in thrones—
Such trust as thou mayst put in what light chance
Flings here and there at will ! Kings have one power,
A matchless honor time can never take : 226
To help the wretched, and to him who asks
To give a safe retreat. This I have brought
From Colchis, this at least I still can claim :
I saved the flower of Grecian chivalry, 230
Achaian chiefs, the offspring of the gods ;
It is to me they owe their Orpheus
Whose singing melted rocks and drew the trees ;
Castor and Pollux are my twofold gift ;
Boreas' sons, and Lynceus whose sharp eye 235
Could pierce beyond the Euxine, are my gift,

And all the Argonauts. Of one alone,
 The chief of chiefs, I do not speak; for him
 Thou owest me naught; those have I saved for thee,
 This one is mine. Rehearse, now, all my crime; 240
 Accuse me; I confess; this is my fault—
 I saved the Argo! Had I heard the voice
 Of maiden modesty or filial love,
 Greece and her leaders had regretted it,
 And he, thy son-in-law, had fallen first 245
 A victim to the fire-belching bull.
 Let fortune trample on me as she will,
 My hand has succored princes, I am glad!
 Thou hast the recompense for all my crimes.
 Condemn me, but give back the cause of crime. 250
 Creon, I own my guilt—guilt known to thee
 When first a suppliant I touched thy knees,
 And asked with outstretched hands protecting aid.
 Again I ask a refuge, some poor spot
 For misery to hide in; grant a place 255
 Withdrawn, a safe asylum in thy realm,
 If I must leave the city.

Creon. I am no prince who rules with cruel sway,
 Or tramples on the wretched with proud foot.
 Have I not shown this true by choosing him 260
 To be my son-in-law who is a man
 Exiled, without resource, in fear of foes?
 One whom Acastus, king of Thessaly,
 Seeks to destroy, that so he may avenge
 A father weak with age, bowed down with years, 265
 Whose limbs were torn asunder? That foul crime
 His pious sisters impiously dared,
 Tempted by thee; if thou wilt go away,
 Jason can then maintain his innocence;

No guiltless blood has stained him, and his hands 270
 Touched not the sword, are yet unstained by thee.
 Foul instigator of all evil deeds,
 With woman's wantonness in daring aught,
 And man's courageous heart—and void of shame,
 Go, purge our kingdom; take thy deadly herbs, 275
 Free us from fear; dwelling in other lands
 Afar, invoke the gods.

Medea. Thou bidst me go?
 Give back the ship and comrade of my flight.
 Why bid me go alone? Not so I came.
 If thou fear war, both should go forth, nor choice 280
 Be made between two equally at fault:
 That old man fell for Jason's sake; impute
 To Jason flight, rapine, a brother slain,
 And a deserted father; not all mine
 The crimes to which a husband tempted me; 285
 'Tis true I sinned, but never for myself.

Creon. Thou shouldst be gone, why waste the time
 with words?

Medea. I go, but going make one last request:
 Let not a mother's guilt drag down her sons.

Creon. Go, as a father I will succor them, 290
 And with a father's care.

Medea. By future hopes,
 By the king's happy marriage, by the strength
 Of thrones, which fickle fortune sometimes shakes,
 I pray thee grant the exile some delay
 That she, perchance about to die, may press 295
 A last kiss on her children's lips.

Creon. Thou seekst
 Time to commit new crime.

Medea. In so brief time

What crime were possible?

Creon.

No time too short

For him who would do ill.

Medea.

Dost thou deny

To misery short space for tears?

Creon.

Deep dread

300

Warns me against thy prayer; yet I will grant
One day in which thou mayst prepare for flight.

Medea. Too great the favor! Of the time allowed,
Something withdraw. I would depart in haste.

Creon.

Before the coming day is ushered in

305

By Phœbus, leave the city or thou diest.

The bridal calls me, and I go to pay

My vows to Hymen.

SCENE III

Chorus. He rashly ventured who was first to make
In his frail boat a pathway through the deep; 310
Who saw his native land behind him fade
In distance blue; who to the raging winds
Trusted his life, his slender keel between
The paths of life and death. Our fathers dwelt
In an unspotted age, and on the shore 315
Where each was born he lived in quietness,
Grew old upon his father's farm content;
With little rich, he knew no other wealth
Than his own land afforded. None knew yet
The changing constellations, nor could use 320
As guides the stars that paint the ether; none
Had learned to shun the rainy Hyades;
None had as yet to Goat, or Northern Wain
That follows slow by old Boötes driven,

boreas, or Zephyr, given names. 145
 O Tiphys was the first to tempt the deep 325
 Ra spreading canvas; for the winds to write
 Wit laws; to furl the sail; or spread it wide
 New sailors longed to fly before the gale,
 When spread topsail fluttered in the breeze. 330
 And the rudder wisely severed by the seas
 The world so assally united, bade
 The pine of Thebes surging at our hands,
 The ocean suffer scourging us unknown fears.
 And distant waters bring heavy penalty 335
 The ill-starred ship paid the way of the sea,
 When the two cliffs, the gateway of the sea,
 Moved as though smitten by the thunderbolt,
 And the imprisoned waters smote the stars.
 Bold Tiphys paled, and from his trembling hand
 Let fall the rudder; Orpheus' music died, 340
 His lyre untouched; the Argo lost her voice.
 When, belted by her girdle of wild dogs,
 The maid of the Sicilian straits gave voice
 From all her mouths, who feared not at her bark?
 Who did not tremble at the witching song 345
 With which the Sirens charmed the Ausonian sea?
 The Thracian Orpheus' lyre had almost forced
 Those hinderers of ships to follow him!
 What was the journey's prize? The golden fleece,
 Medea, fiercer than the raging flood,— 350
 Worthy reward for those first mariners!
 The sea forgets its former wrath; submits
 To the new laws; and not alone the ship
 Minerva builded, manned by sons of kings,
 Finds rowers; other ships may sail the deep. 355
 Old metes are moved, new city walls spring up
 On distant soil, and nothing now remains

As it has been in the much-traveled world.
The cold Araxes' stream the Indian drinks ;
The Persian quaffs the Rhine ; a time shall come
With the slow years, when ocean shall strike off 360
The chains from earth, and a great world shall
Lie opened ; Tiphys shall win other lands— 365
Another Tiphys—Thule cease to be
Earth's utmost bound.

ACT III

SCENE I

Medea, Nurse.

Nurse. Stay, foster-child, why fly so swiftly hence?
Restrain thy wrath! curb thy impetuous haste!
As a Bacchante, frantic with the god
And filled with rage divine, uncertain walks
The top of snowy Pindus or the peak 370
Of Nysa, so Medea wildly goes
Hither and thither; on her face the mark
Of frenzied rage, her visage flushed, her breast
Shaken by sobs. She cries aloud, her eyes
Are drowned in scalding tears; again she laughs; 375
All passions surge within her angry heart.
Where will she fling the burden of her soul?
She hesitates, she threatens, storms, complains,
Where falls her vengeance? where will break this
wave
Of fury? Passion overflows! she plans 380
No easy crime, no ordinary deed.
Herself she will surpass; I mark old signs
Of raging; something terrible she plans,
Some deed inhuman, devilish, and wild.
Ye gods, avert the horrors I foresee! 385
Medea. Wretch, dost thou seek how far to show thy
hate?

Imitate love! And must I then endure
 Without revenge the royal marriage-torch?
 Shall this day prove unfruitful, sought and gained
 Only by earnest effort? While the earth 390
 Hangs free within the heavens; while the vault
 Of heaven sweeps round the earth with changeless
 change;

While the sands lie unnumbered; while the day
 Follows the sun, the night brings up the stars;
 Arcturus never wet in ocean's wave 395
 Rolls round the pole; while rivers seaward flow,
 My hate shall never cease to seek revenge.

Did ever fierceness of a ravening beast;
 Or Scylla or Charybdis sucking down
 The waters of the wild Ausonian 400

And the Sicilian seas; or Ætna fierce,
 That holds imprisoned great Enceladus
 Breathing forth flame, so glow as I with threats?
 Not the swift rivers, nor the storm-tossed sea,
 Nor wind-blown ocean, nor the force of flame 405
 By storm-wind fanned, can imitate my wrath.

I will o'erthrow and bring to naught the world!
 Did Jason fear the king? Thessalian war?
 True love fears naught. Or was he forced to yield,
 And gave consent unwillingly? But still 410
 He might have sought his wife for one farewell.
 This too he feared to do. He might have gained
 From Creon some delay of banishment.

One day is granted for my two sons' sake!
 I do not make complaint of too short time, 415
 It is enough for much; this day shall see
 What none shall ever hide. I will attack
 The very gods, and shake the universe!

Nurse. Lady, thy spirit so disturbed by ills
 Restrain, and let thy storm-tossed soul find rest. 420

Medea. Rest I can never find until I see
 All dragged with me to ruin ; all shall fall
 When I do ;—so to share one's woe is joy.

Nurse. Think what thou hast to fear if thou
 persist ;
 No one can safely fight with princely power. 425

SCENE II

The Nurse withdraws ; enter Jason.

Jason. The lot is ever hard ; bitter is fate,
 Equally bitter if it slay or spare ;
 God gives us remedies worse than our ills.
 Would I keep faith with her I deem my wife
 I must expect to die ; would I shun death 430
 I must forswear myself. Not fear of death
 Has conquered honor, but love full of fear
 Knowing the father's death involves the sons.
 O holy Justice, if thou dwell in heaven,
 I call on thee to witness that the sons 435
 Vanquish their father ! Say the mother's love
 Is fierce and spurns the yoke, she still will deem
 Her children of more worth than marriage joys.
 I fain would go to her with prayers, and lo,
 She starts at sight of me, her look grows wild, 440
 Hatred she shows and grief.

Medea. Jason, I flee !
 I flee, it is not new to change my home,
 The cause of banishment alone is new ;
 I have been exiled hitherto for thee.

I go, as thou compellst me, from thy home, 445
 But whither shall I go? Shall I, perhaps,
 Seek Phasis, Colchis, and my father's realm
 Whose soil is watered by a brother's blood?
 What land dost thou command me seek? what sea?
 The Euxine's jaws through which I led that band 450
 Of noble princes when I followed thee,
 Adulterer, through the Symplegades?
 Little Iolchos? Tempe? Thessaly?
 Whatever way I opened up for thee
 I closed against myself. Where shall I go? 455
 Thou drivest into exile, but hast given
 No place of banishment. I will go hence.
 The king, Creusa's father, bids me go,
 And I will do his bidding. Heap on me
 Most dreadful punishment, it is my due. 460
 With cruel penalties let the king's wrath
 Pursue thy mistress, load my hands with chains,
 And in a dungeon of eternal night
 Imprison me—'tis less than I deserve!
 Ungrateful one, recall the fiery bull; 465
 The earth-born soldiers, who at my command
 Slew one another; and the longed-for spoils
 Of Phrixus' ram, whose watchful guardian,
 The sleepless dragon, at my bidding slept;
 The brother slain; the many, many crimes 470
 In one crime gathered. Think how, led by me,
 By me deceived, that old man's daughters dared
 To slay their aged father, dead for aye!
 By thy hearth's safety, by thy children's weal,
 By the slain dragon, by these blood-stained hands 475
 I never spared from doing aught for thee,
 By thy past fears, and by the sea and sky

Witnesses of our marriage, pity me!
 Happy thyself, make me some recompense!
 Of all the ravished gold the Scythians brought 480
 From far, as far as India's burning plains,
 Wealth our wide palace hardly could contain,
 So that we hung our groves with gold, I took
 Nothing. My brother only bore I thence,
 And him for thee I sacrificed. I left 485
 My country, father, brother, maiden shame:
 This was my marriage portion; give her own
 To her who goes an exile.

Jason. When angry Creon thought to have thee
 slain,
 Urged by my prayers, he gave thee banishment. 490

Medea. I looked for a reward; the gift I see
 Is exile.

Jason. While thou mayst fly, fly in haste!
 The wrath of kings is ever hard to bear.

Medea. Thou giv'st me such advice because thou
 lov'st

Creusa, wouldst divorce a hated wife! 495

Jason. And does Medea taunt me with my loves?

Medea. More—treacheries and murders.

Jason. Canst thou charge
 Such sins to me?

Medea. All I have ever done.

Jason. It only needs that I should share the guilt
 Of these thy crimes!

Medea. Thine are they, thine alone; 500
 He is the criminal who reaps the fruit.

Though all should brand thy wife with infamy,
 Thou shouldst defend and call her innocent:
 She who has sinned for thee, toward thee hold pure.

Jason. To me my life is an unwelcome gift 505
Of which I am ashamed.

Medea. Who is ashamed
To owe his life to me can lay it down.

Jason. For thy sons' sake control thy fiery heart.

Medea. I will have none of them, I cast them off,
Abjure them ; shall Creusa to my sons 510
Give brothers ?

Jason. To an exile's wretched sons
A mighty queen will give them.

Medea. Never come
That evil day that mingles a great race
With race unworthy,—Phœbus' glorious sons
With sons of Sisyphus.

Jason. What, cruel one, 515
Wouldst thou drag both to banishment ? Away !

Medea. Creon has heard my prayer.

Jason. What can I do ?

Medea. For me ? Some crime perhaps.

Jason. Two wrathful kings
I fear.

Medea. Medea's wrath is still more fierce !
Let us essay our power, the victor's prize 520
Be Jason.

Jason. Passion-weary, I submit ;
Thou too shouldst fear a lot so often tried.

Medea. Fortune has ever served me faithfully.

Jason. Acastus comes.

Medea. Creon's a nearer foe,
Flee thou from both. Medea does not ask 525
That thou shouldst arm thyself against the king,
Or soil thy hands with murder of thy kin ;
Flee with me innocent.

Jason. Who will oppose
If double war ensue, and the two kings
Join forces?

Medea. Add to them the Colchian troops 530
And King Æetes, Scythian hosts and Greeks,
Medea conquers all!

Jason. I greatly fear
A scepter's power.

Medea. Do not covet it.

Jason. We must cut short our converse, lest it breed
Suspicion.

Medea. Now from high Olympus send 535
Thy thunder, Jupiter; stretch forth thy hand,
Prepare thy lightning, from the riven clouds
Make the world tremble, nor with careful hand
Spare him or me; whichever of us dies
Dies guilty; thy avenging thunderbolt 540
Cannot mistake the victim.

Jason. Try to speak
More sanely; calm thyself. If aught can aid
Thy flight from Creon's house, thou needst but ask.

Medea. My soul is strong enough, and wont to
scorn
The wealth of kings; this boon alone I crave, 545
To take my children with me when I go;
Into their bosoms I would shed my tears,
New sons are thine.

Jason. Would I might grant thy prayer;
Paternal love forbids me, Creon's self
Could not compel me to it. They alone 550
Lighten the sorrow of a grief-parched soul.
For them I live, I sooner would resign
Breath, members, light.

Medea. [*Aside.*] 'Tis well! He loves his sons,
 This, then, the place where he may feel a wound!
 [*To Jason.*] Before I go, thou wilt, at least, permit
 That I should give my sons a last farewell, 556
 A last embrace? But one thing more I ask:
 If in my grief I've poured forth threatening words,
 Retain them not in mind; let memory hold
 Only my softer speech, my words of wrath 560
 Obliterate.

Jason. I have erased them all
 From my remembrance. I would counsel thee
 Be calm, act gently; calmness quiets pain.
 [*Exit Jason.*]

SCENE III

Medea, Nurse.

Medea. He's gone! And can it be he leaves me so,
 Forgetting me and all my guilt? Forgot? 565
 Nay, never shall Medea be forgot!
 Up! Act! Call all thy power to aid thee now;
 This fruit of crime is thine, to shun no crime!
 Deceit is useless, so they fear my guile.
 Strike where they do not dream thou canst be feared.
 Medea, haste, be bold to undertake 571
 The possible—yea, that which is not so!
 Thou, faithful nurse, companion of my griefs
 And varying fortunes, aid my wretched plans.
 I have a robe, gift of the heavenly powers, 575
 An ornament of a king's palace, given
 By Phoebus to my father as a pledge
 Of sonship; and a necklace of wrought gold;

And a bright diadem, inlaid with gems,
 With which they used to bind my hair. These gifts,
 Endued with poison by my magic arts, 581
 My sons shall carry for me to the bride.
 Pay vows to Hecate, bring the sacrifice,
 Set up the altars. Let the mounting flame
 Envelop all the house. 585

SCENE IV

Chorus. Fear not the power of flame, nor swelling
 gale,
 Nor hurtling dart, nor cloudy wind that brings
 The winter storms; fear not when Danube sweeps
 Unchecked between his widely severed shores,
 Nor when the Rhone hastes seaward, and the sun 590
 Has broken up the snow upon the hills,
 And Hæmus flows in rivers.
 A wife deserted, loving while she hates,
 Fear greatly; blindly burns her anger's flame,
 She cares not to be ruled, nor bears the curb, 595
 Nor fears to die; she courts the hostile swords.
 Ye gods, we ask your grace divine for him
 Who safely crossed the seas; the ocean's lord
 Is angry for his conquered kingdom's sake;
 Spare Jason, we entreat! 600
 Th' impetuous youth who dared to drive the car
 Of Phœbus, keeping not the wonted course,
 Died in the heavenly fires himself had lit.
 Few are the evils of the well-known way;
 Seek the old paths your fathers safely trod, 605
 The sacred federations of the world
 Keep still inviolate.

The men who dipped the oars of that brave ship ;
 Who plundered of their shade the sacred groves
 Of Pelion ; passed between the unstable cliffs ; 610
 Endured so many hardships on the deep ;
 And cast their anchor on a savage coast,
 Passing again with ravished foreign gold,
 Atoned with fearful death for dire wrong
 To Ocean's sacred laws. 615

The angry deep demanded punishment :
 To an unskilful pilot Tiphys gave
 The rudder. On a foreign coast he fell,
 Far from his father's kingdom, and he lies
 With nameless shades, under a lowly tomb. 620
 Becalmed in her still harbor Aulis held
 Th' impatient ships, remembering in wrath
 The king that she lost thence.

Sweet voiced Camena's son, who touched his lyre
 So sweetly that the floods stood still, the winds 625
 Were silent, and the birds forgot to sing,
 And forests followed him, on Thracian fields
 Lies dead, his head borne down by Hebrus' stream.
 He touched again the Styx and Tartarus,
 But not again returns. 630

Alcides overthrew the north wind's sons ;
 He slew that son of Neptune who could take
 Unnumbered forms ; but after he had made
 Peace over land and sea, and opened wide
 The realm of Dis, lying on Cæta's top 635
 He gave his body to the cruel fire,
 Destroyed by his wife's gift—the fatal robe
 Poisoned with Centaur's blood.

Ancæus fell a victim to the boar
 Of Caledonia ; Meleager slew 640

His mother's brother, perished by the hand
 Of his own mother. They have merited
 Their lot, but what the crime that he atoned
 Whom great Alcides sought so long in vain,
 The tender Hylas drawn beneath safe waves? 645
 Go now, brave soldiers, boldly plow the main,
 But fear the gentle streams.
 Idmon the serpents buried in the sands
 Of Libya, though he knew the future well.
 Mopsus, to others true, false to himself, 650
 Fell far from Thebes; and if the seer spoke true,
 Peleus must wander exiled from his realm;
 And Nauplius, seeking injury to the Greeks
 By his deceitful beacon fires, shall fall
 Into the ocean; Palamedes, too, 655
 Shall suffer, dying for his father's sin.
 Orleus, smitten by the thunderbolt,
 Shall perish on the sea; Admetus' wife
 To save her husband's life shall give her own.
 He who commanded that the golden spoil 660
 Be carried in the ships had traveled far,
 But, plunged in seething cauldron, Pelias died
 In narrow limits. 'Tis enough, ye gods;
 Ye have avenged the sea!

ACT IV

SCENE I

Nurse. I shrink with horror! Ruin threatens us!
How terribly her wrath inflames itself! 666
Her former force awakes, thus I have seen
Medea raging and attacking God,
Compelling heaven. Greater crime than then
She now prepares. No sooner had she sought 670
Wildly her fatal shrine than she put forth
Her every power, and what before she feared
She does; lets loose all ills, mysterious arts.
With her left hand the dismal sacrifice
Preparing, she invokes whatever ills 675
The Libyan sands with their fierce heat create,
Or frost-bound Taurus with perpetual snow
Encompasses. Drawn by her magic spell,
Come from their desert holes a scaly host.
The serpent drags his heavy length along, *cf. Ptolemy's "Geographia" 680*
Darts his forked tongue, and seeks his destined prey.
Hearing her incantation, he draws back
And knots his swelling body coiling it.—
'They are but feeble poisons earth brings forth,
And harmless darts,' she says, 'heaven's ills I seek. 685
Now is the time for deeper sorcery.
The dragon like a torrent shall descend,
Whose mighty folds the Great and Lesser Bear
Know well (the Great Bear o'er the Phrygians shines,

The Less o'er Tyre); Ophiuchus shall loose 690
 His grasp, and poison flow. Come at my call,
 Python, who dared to fight twin deities.
 The Hydra once cut off by Hercules,
 Accustomed from its wounds to gain fresh strength.
 Shall come. Thou ever watchful Colchian one, 695
 Be present with the rest—thou, who first slept
 Lulled by my incantations.' When the brood
 Of serpents has been called she blends the juice
 Of poisonous herbs; all Eryx' pathless heights,
 Bear, or the snow-capped top of Caucasus 700
 Wet with Prometheus' blood, where winter reigns;
 All that the rich Arabians use to tip
 Their poisoned shafts, or the light Parthians,
 Or warlike Medes; all Suebian witches cull
 In the Hyrcanian forests in the north; 705
 All poisons that the earth brings forth in spring
 When birds are nesting; or when winter cold
 Has torn away the beauty of the groves
 And bound the world in icy manacles.
 Whatever herb gives flower the cause of death, 710
 Or juice of twisted root, her hands have culled.
 These on Thessalian Athos grew, and those
 On mighty Pindus; on Pangæus' height
 She cut the tender leaves with bloody scythe.
 These Tigris nurtured with its eddies deep, 715
 The Danube those; Hydaspes rich in gems
 Flowing with current warm through levels dry,
 Bætis that gives its name to neighboring lands
 And meets the western ocean languidly,
 Have nurtured these. The knife cut those at dawn;
 These other herbs at dead of night were reaped; 721
 And these were plucked with the enchanted nail.

Death-dealing plants she chooses, wrings the blood
 Of serpents, and she takes ill-omened birds,
 The sad owl's heart, the quivering entrails cut 725
 From the horned owl living ;—sorts all these.
 In some the eager force of flame is found,
 In some the bitter cold of sluggish ice ;
 To these she adds the venom of her words
 As greatly to be feared. But lo, I hear 730
 The sound of her mad footstep and her song.
 Earth trembles when she hears.

SCENE II

Medea, before the altar of Hecate.

Medea. Lo, I invoke you, all ye silent shades,
 Infernal gods, blind Chaos, sunless home
 Of shadowy Dis, and squalid caves of Death 735
 Bound by the banks of Tartarus. Lost souls,
 For this new bridal leave your wonted toil.
 Stand still, thou whirling wheel, Ixion touch
 Again firm ground ; come, Tantalus, and drink
 Unchecked the wave of the Pirenian fount. 740
 Let heavier punishment on Creon wait :—
 Thou stone of Sisyphus, worn smooth, roll back ;
 And ye Danaïdes who strive in vain
 To fill your leaking jars, I need your aid.
 Come at my invocation, star of night, 745
 Endued with form most horrible, nor threat
 With single face, thou three-formed deity !
 For thee, according to my country's use,
 With hair unfileted and naked feet
 I've trod the lonely groves ; called forth the rain 750

From cloudless skies ; have driven back the sea ;
 And forced the ocean to withdraw its waves.
 Earth sees heaven's laws confused, the sun and stars
 Shining together, and the two Bears wet
 In the forbidden ocean. I have changed 755
 The circle of the seasons :—at my word
 Earth flourishes with summer ; Ceres sees
 A winter harvest ; Phasis' rushing stream
 Flows to its source ; and Danube that divides
 Into so many mouths restrains its flood 760
 Of waters—hardly moving past its shores.
 The winds are silent ; but the waters speak,
 The wild seas roar ; the home of ancient groves
 Loses its leafy shade ; and day returns
 At my command ; the sun stands still in heaven. 765
 My incantations move the Hyades.
 It is thy hour, Dian.

For thee my bloody hands have wrought this crown
 Nine times by serpents girt ; those knotted snakes
 Rebellious Typhon bore, who made revolt 770
 Against Jove's kingdom ; Nessus gave this blood
 When dying ; Cæta's funeral pyre provides
 These ashes which have drunk the poisoned blood
 Of dying Hercules ; and here thou seest
 Althea's vengeful brand, she sacrificed 775
 A mother's to a sister's love. These quills
 The Harpies left within some trackless cave,
 Their refuge when they fled from Zetes' wrath ;
 And these were dropped by the Stymphalian birds
 That felt the wound of arrows dipped in blood 780
 Of the Lernæan Hydra.

The altars find a voice, the tripod moves,
 Stirred by the favoring goddess. Her swift car

I see approach—not the full-orbed that rolls
 All night through heaven ; but as, with darkened light,
 Her orb contracted, with wan face she moves 786
 Through night's dark skies, vexed by Thessalian
 charms.

So, pale one, from thy torch shed murky light,
 Affright the nations that they clash for thee
 Corinthian cymbals. Here I pay to thee, 790
 On altars made of turf and red with blood,
 These solemn rites ; have stolen from the tomb
 This torch that gives its baleful funeral light ;
 To thee with bowed head I have made my prayer ;
 And in accordance with funereal use, 795
 Have filleted my loosened hair, have plucked
 This branch that grows beside the Stygian wave ;
 Like a wild Mænad, laying bare my breast,
 With sacred knife I cut for thee my arm ;
 My blood is on the altars ! Hand, learn well 800
 To use the knife and shed blood dear to thee.
 See, from the wound, the sacred stream flows forth,
 Daughter of Perses, have I asked too oft
 Thine aid ? Recall no more my former prayers.
 To-day as always I invoke thine aid 805
 For Jason only ! Ah, endue this robe
 With such a baleful power that the bride
 May feel at its first touch consuming fire
 Of serpent's poison in her inmost veins ;
 For fire flames hid in the bright gold, a gift 810
 Prometheus gave and taught me how to store—
 He now atones his daring theft from heaven
 With tortured vitals. Mulciber has given
 This flame, and I in sulphur nurtured it ;
 I brought a spark from the destroying fire 815

Of Phaethon ; I have the flame breathed forth
 By the Chimæra, and the fire I snatched
 From Colchis' savage bull ; and mixed with these
 Medusa's venom. I have bade all keep
 Their poison unrevealed ; now, Hecate, add 820
 The sting to poison, keep the seeds of flame
 Hid in my gift ; let them deceive the sight
 Nor burn the touch ; but let them penetrate
 Her very heart and veins, melt all her limbs,
 Consume her bones in smoke. - Her burning hair 825
 Shall glow more brightly than the nuptial torch !
 My vows are heard, and Hecate thrice has barked,
 And shaken fire from her gleaming brand.

'Tis finished ! Call my sons. My royal gifts,
 Ye shall be borne by them to the new bride. 830
 Go, go, my sons, a hapless mother's brood,
 Placate with gifts and prayers your father's wife !
 But come again with speed, that I may know
 A last embrace !

SCENE III

Chorus. Where hastes the blood-stained Mænad,
 headlong driven 835
 By angry love ? What mischief plots her rage ?
 With wrath her face grows rigid ; her proud head
 She fiercely shakes, and dares defiantly
 Threaten the king.
 Who would believe her exiled from the realm ? 840
 Her cheeks glow crimson, pallor puts to flight
 The red, no color lingers on her face ;
 Her steps are driven to and fro as when
 A tigress rages, of her young bereft,

Beside the Ganges in the gloomy woods. 845
Medea knows not how to curb her love
Or hate. Now love and hate together rage.
When will she leave the fair Pelasgian fields,
The wicked Colchian one, and free from fear
Our king and kingdom? Drive with no slow rein 850
Thy car, Diana ; let the sweet night hide
The sunlight. Hesperus, end the dreaded day.

ACT V

SCENE I

Messenger, Chorus.

Messenger [*enters in haste*]. All are destroyed, the
royal empire falls,
Father and child lie in one funeral pyre.

Chorus. Destroyed by what deceit?

Messenger. That which is wont
To ruin princes—gifts.

Chorus. Could these work harm? 856

Messenger. I myself wonder, and can hardly deem
The wrong accomplished, though I know it done.

Chorus. How did it happen?

Messenger. A destructive fire
Spreads everywhere as at command; even now 860
The city is in fear, the palace burned.

Chorus. Let water quench the flames.

Messenger. It will not these,
As by a miracle floods feed the fire.
The more we fight it so much more it glows.

SCENE II

Medea, Nurse.

Nurse. Up! up! Medea! Swiftly flee the land 865
Of Pelops; seek in haste a distant shore.

Medea. Shall I fly? I? Were I already gone
I would return for this, that I might see

These new betrothals. Dost thou pause, my soul,
 And shrink to follow up thy first success? 870
 This joy's but the beginning of revenge.
 Thou still dost love if thou art satisfied
 To widow Jason. For this work prepare:
 Honor begone and maiden modesty,—
 It were a light revenge pure hands could yield. 875
 Strengthen thy drooping spirit, stir up wrath,
 Drain from thy heart its all of ancient force,
 Thy deeds till now call love; awake, and act,
 That they may see how light, how little worth,
 All former crime—the prelude of revenge! 880
 What was there great my novice hands could dare?
 What was the madness of my girlhood days?
 I am Medea now, through crime made strong.
 Rejoice, because through thee thy brother died;
 Rejoice, because through thee his limbs were torn;
 Through thee thy father lost the golden fleece; 886
 That, armed by thee, his daughters Pelias slew.
 Find thou a way, revenge. No novice hand
 Thou bring'st to crime; what wilt thou do; what dart
 Let fly against thy treacherous enemy? 890
 I know not what of crime my madness plots,
 Nor yet dare I confess it to myself!
 In folly I made haste—would that my foe
 Had children by this other! Mine are his,
 We'll say Creusa bore them! 'Tis enough; 895
 Through them my heart at last finds just revenge;
 My soul must be prepared for this last crime.
 Ye who were once my children, mine no more,
 Pay ye the forfeit for your father's crimes.
 Awe strikes my spirit and benumbs my hand; 900
 My heart beats wildly; vanished is my rage,

And mother love, returning, now drives out
 The hatred of the wife. I shed their blood?
 My children's blood? Give better counsel, rage!
 Be far from thee this crime! What guilt is theirs?
 Is Jason not their father?—guilt enough! 906
 And, greater guilt, Medea calls them sons.
 They are not sons of mine, so let them die!
 Nay, rather let them perish since they are!
 But they are innocent!—my brother was! 910
 Waverest thou? Do tears make wet thy cheek?
 Do wrath and love like adverse tides impel
 Now here, now there? As when the winds wage war
 And the wild waves against each other smite,
 And warring tides run high, and ocean raves, 915
 My heart is beaten, and love drives out wrath,
 As wrath drives love. My anger dies in love.
 Dear sons, sole solace of a storm-tossed house,
 Come hither, lock your arms about my neck;
 You may be safe for him, if safe for me! 920
 But I am driven into exile, flight;
 Torn from my bosom weeping, soon they'll go
 Lamenting for my kisses—let them die
 For father and for mother! Once again
 Rage swells, hate burns; again the fury seeks 925
 Th' unwilling hand—I follow where wrath leads.
 Would that the children that made proud the heart
 Of Niobe were mine, that I had borne
 Twice seven sons! In bearing only two
 I have been cursed! And yet it is enough 930
 For father, brother, that I have borne two.—
 Where does that horde of furies haste? whom seek?
 For whom prepare their fires? or for whom
 Brandish the infernal band the bloody torch?

The huge snake hisses writhing, as they lash 935
 Their serpent scourges ; with her hostile brand
 Whom does Megæra seek? What dim-seen shade
 Is that which hither brings its scattered limbs?
 It is my brother, and he seeks revenge ;
 I grant it, thrust the torches in my eyes ; 940
 Kill, burn ; the furies have me in their power !
 Brother, command the avenging goddesses
 To leave me, and the shades to seek their place
 In the infernal regions without fear ;
 Here leave me to myself, and use this hand 945
 That held the sword—your soul has found revenge.

[Kills one of her sons.

What means this sudden noise? They come in arms
 And seek to slay me. Having thus begun
 My murders, I will go upon the roof,
 Come, follow thou, I'll take the dead with me. 950
 Strike now, my soul, nor longer hide thy power,
 But show the world thy strength.

*[She goes out with the nurse and the living boy,
 and carries with her the body of her dead son.*

SCENE III

*Jason in the foreground, Medea with the children
 appears upon the roof.*

Jason. Ye faithful ones, who share
 In the misfortunes of your harassed king,
 Hasten to take the author of these deeds. 955
 Come hither, hither, cohorts of brave men ;
 Bring up your weapons ; overthrow the house.

Medea. I have recaptured now my crown and throne,

My brother and my father ; Colchians hold
The golden fleece ; my kingdom is won back ; 960
My lost virginity returns to me !

O gods at last appeased ! Glad nuptial day !
Go, finished is the crime. Not yet complete
Is vengeance, finish while thy hand is strong
To smite. Why stay, why hesitate, my soul ? 965

Thou art able ! All thine anger falls to nought !
I do repent of that which I have done !

What hast thou done, O miserable one ?
What, miserable ? Though I should repent,
'Tis done, great joy fills my unwilling heart, 970

And, lo, the joy increases. But one thing
Before was lacking—Jason did not see !

All that he has not seen I count as lost.

Jason. She threatens from the roof ; let fire be brought,

That she may perish burned with her own flame. 975

Medea. Pile high the funeral pyre of thy sons,
And rear their tomb. To Creon and thy wife
I have already paid the honors due.

This son is dead, and this one too shall die,
And thou shalt see him perish.

Jason. By the gods, 980

By our sad flight together, and the bond
I have not willingly forsaken, spare

Our son ! If there is any crime, 'tis mine ;
Put me to death, strike down the guilty one.

Medea. There where thou askest mercy, and canst
feel 985

The sting, I thrust the sword. Go, Jason, seek

Thy virgin bride, desert a mother's bed.

Jason. Let one suffice for vengeance.

Medea. Had it been

That one could satisfy my hands with blood,
I had slain none. Although I should slay two, 990
The number is too small for my revenge.

Jason. Then go, fill up the measure of thy crime,
I ask for nothing but that thou should'st make
A speedy end.

Medea. Now, grief, take slow revenge ;
It is my day ; haste not, let me enjoy. 995

[*Kills the other child.*]

Jason. Slay me, mine enemy !

Medea. Dost thou implore

My pity ? It is well ! I am avenged.

O vengeance, no more offerings can I give,

Nothing is left to immolate to thee !

Look up, ungrateful Jason, recognize 1000

Thy wife ; so I am wont to flee. The way

Lies open through the skies ; two dragons bend

Their necks, submissive to the yoke. I go

In my swift car through heaven. Take thy sons !

[*She casts down to him the bodies of her children,
and is borne away in a chariot drawn by dragons.*]

Jason. Go through the skies sublime, and in thy
flight 1005

Prove that there are no gods where'er thou goest.

My



PHÆDRA

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

HIPPOLYTUS.

THESEUS.

PHÆDRA.

NURSE.

MESSENGER.

CHORUS.

SCENE: *Athens.*

PHÆDRA

ACT I

SCENE I

Hippolytus, and his Huntsmen.

Hippolytus. Cecropians, go gird the shadowy groves,
And ridges of the mountains ; traverse swift
The places that 'neath rocky Parnes lie,
Where, swiftly flowing through Thessalian vales,
The river roars ; ascend the hills that shine 5
White ever with Rhipean snow. Where stand
The tangled woods of lofty elder, go ;
Go where fields stretch o'er which sweet Zephyr blows
With dewy breath that wakens vernal herbs,
Where flows Ilissus' narrow, sluggish stream 10
Through barren lands and with its niggard thread
Touches the sterile sands. Turn leftward, ye,
To where the wooded highlands open out
Toward Marathon, where nightly for their young
The does seek food ; go ye where, breathed upon 15
By the soft south wind, harsh Acharnæ's cold
Is tempered ; tread ye sweet Hymettus' cliffs :
Seek ye Achidnæ small ; too long has lain
Immune the land where on the curved sea shore
Sunion presses. If a huntsman's pride 20
Is felt by any, Phlius calls to him—
There dwells that fear of husbandmen, the boar,

Dreaded, well known, already scarred with wounds.
 Give to the dogs that silent track the game
 Free rein, but hold the swift Molossian hounds 25
 In leash, and let the savage Cretans pull
 On the stout chains with straining necks. Bind fast,
 With care, by firmest knots, the Spartan dogs;
 Daring and eager for the chase are they.
 The time draws near when through the hollow rocks 30
 Shall sound their baying. While it is but dawn
 And while the dewy earth still shows the tracks,
 With nostrils wide, sagacious let them snuff
 The air, and with their noses to the ground
 Search for the quarry's scent. Let some make haste 35
 To carry on their backs the nets, and some
 To bear the noose; and let the feathered snare,
 Red dyed, with empty terror fill the prey.
 Thou shalt the light dart poise; in both hands, thou,
 Direct the heavy spear; thou, lying hid, 40
 Shalt with thy clamor drive the wild beasts forth,
 And thou, now victor, with curved slaughtering knife
 Lay bare the victim's heart. Be present now
 To us thy comrades, goddess hero-souled,
 To whom the secret parts of earth lie bared, 45
 Whose darts unerring ever find their prey
 Whether the quarry drink Araxes' stream
 Or on the frozen Hister play. Thy hand
 Has slain Gætulian lions, and the deer
 Of Crete; and now with lighter hand the flight 50
 Of the swift doe is stayed. The tiger yields
 To thee, to thee the rough-haired bison yields
 And the wild, broad-horned ox. Whatever finds
 In solitary places pasture land,
 Whate'er the needy Garamantian knows, 55

Whate'er the Arabs in their fertile groves,
 Or the Sarmatian wanderers in waste plains,
 Whate'er the Pyrenees' wild summit hides,
 All that Hyrcania's wooded pastures know,
 Diana, fear thy bow. When to the woods 60
 A worshipper accepted takes thy grace,
 The toils hold conquered game, no foot breaks through
 The net, the groaning wagon bears the spoils,
 The muzzles of the dogs are wet with blood,
 And joyously the rustics seek again 65
 Their huts. Thou art propitious, goddess, now!
 The signal by the loud-mouthed dogs is given,
 Lo, to the woods I'm called ; the shortest way
 I follow.

SCENE II

Phædra, Nurse.

Phædra. O mighty Crete, thou ruler of wide seas, 70
 Whose ships unnumbered sail by every coast,
 Through every sea which Nereus' prows divide,
 Far as Phœnician soil, why driv'st thou me
 To pass my youth in sorrow and in tears,
 A hostage given to the hated race, 75
 And wedded to a foe. Lo, far away,
 My husband Theseus is a fugitive
 And keeps such faith as he is wont to keep.
 Through the dense shadows of the infernal lake
 That knows no backward path bold Theseus swam, 80
 Pirithous' friend, that he might carry thence,
 As bride, the infernal monarch's ravished wife ;
 He goes, the friend of folly, unrestrained
 By fear or shame ; in lowest Acheron

The father of Hippolytus seeks out
Unlawful marriage and adultery. 85
Yet other, greater griefs than this weigh down
My sad heart, neither quiet night nor sleep
Frees me from care: my grief is fed and grows,
And glows within me as the vapor glows 90
In Etna's depths. The web of Pallas lies
Neglected, from my idle hands the flax
Has fall'n; no longer am I glad to pay
My votive offerings at the holy shrines,
Nor to be present with the Attic choir 95
Among the altars, and to wave the torch
In sacred, silent rites, nor to approach
With pious ceremony and chaste hands
Her who was guardian goddess of the earth
Declared. My only pleasure is to hunt 100
Wild beasts, and with my supple hands to hurl
The heavy dart. O whither dost thou tend,
My soul? Why dost thou madly love the woods?
I feel my wretched mother's fatal sin:
Our family has been wont within the woods 105
To sin for love. O mother, I am moved
With pity for thee: to a shocking crime
Stirred, thou didst boldly love the savage lord
Of the wild herd, that fierce adulterer,
Impatient of the yoke, of untamed bands 110
The leader—yet for something he felt love!
What god, what Dædalus will aid my fires?
Not if again he could return himself,
Potent in Attic arts, who safely hid
Our minotaur within the labyrinth, 115
Could any aid to my distress be given.
Venus, against the offspring of the sun

Most deeply angered, by our homage now
 Avenging both herself and Mars, weighs down
 The race of Phœbus with most shameful crime. 120
 No daughter of unfaithful Minos' house
 Is free from love—love ever joined with crime.

Nurse. O wife of Theseus, Jove's illustrious child,
 From thy chaste bosom swiftly thrust such sin,
 O quench these fires, nor yield to cruel hope. 125
 Whoever from the first contends against
 And conquers love, is safe, but those who nurse
 The evil with sweet blandishments too late
 Refuse to bear the yoke themselves assumed.
 And yet I am not ignorant, in truth, 130
 How the proud spirit of the princess spurns—
 Haughty and arrogant—a guiding hand.
 I'll bear whatever outcome fate may bring;
 Approaching freedom makes the aged brave.
 To wish for honor nor to go astray 135
 From the right path is best, yet near to this
 Is shame that one has known the thought of sin.
 Where goest thou, unhappy one? wouldst spread
 Thy household's infamy? Wouldst thou surpass
 Thy mother? Greater is thy crime than hers; 140
 Thou must impute the minotaur to fate,
 Thy crime is offspring of thine own self-will.
 If thou, because thy husband sees no more
 The light of upper day, shouldst deem thy sin
 To be committed safely, without fear, 145
 Thou errst. Though Theseus is in depths profound
 Of Lethe hidden, though forevermore
 He dwell in Stygian darkness, yet why deem
 That he who gives the law to many lands
 And rules the waters with his empery wide 150

Would let so base a crime go undivulged?
 Wise is a father's care.—Yet shouldst thou think
 That we by subtilty or guile might hide
 Such evil from him, wherefore shouldst thou think
 Thy mother's parent who pours forth his light 155
 On all things, or the father of the gods
 Who shakes the world when in his flashing hand
 He waves the thunderbolt from Etna's forge
 Will see it not? Dost thou indeed believe
 That it is possible to do this deed 160
 In sight of these thy ancestors, who see
 All thou wouldst hide? Yet should some favoring
 god
 Conceal the shameful union, grant to lust
 Protection hitherto denied to crime,
 What of the everpresent punishment, 165
 The conscious terror of a guilty mind,
 The heart that knows its fault and fears itself?
 Some crimes are safe, no sinner feels secure.
 Stifle the flames of guilty love, I pray,
 Do not a sin which never yet was done 170
 In barbarous lands, not on the level plains
 Of wandering Getæ, nor the unfriendly heights
 Of Taurus, nor in lonely Scythia.
 Make thy mind chaste, drive out the horrid thought,
 And mindful of thy mother, fear to try 175
 Strange unions. Wouldst thou give one marriage bed
 To son and father, in thy impious womb
 Conceive a progeny so basely mixed?
 Forth then, and with thy bestial fires o'erthrow
 The laws of nature; why should monsters fail? 180
 Why empty leave thy brother's labyrinth?
 As often as a Cretan woman loves

Shall she not dare unwonted prodigies ?
 Shall nature not withdraw from her own laws ?

Phædra. I know that what thou callst to mind
 is true, 185

Love's fire compels me choose the worser part.
 My soul hastes downward not unknowingly,
 And seeking saner counsels, vainly turns
 Backward. So when his heavy boat is driven
 By adverse currents does the sailor use 190
 In vain his labor, and his conquered ship
 Yields to the racing current. What avail
 Is reason? Madness has o'ercome and reigns ;
 The potent god within my breast holds sway.
 The unbridled, winged one in all the world 195
 Holds sway, he burns with unrelenting flames
 Ev'n wounded Jove, the warlike Mars has felt
 Those torches, and the artisan who makes
 Jove's triple thunderbolts has felt them too,
 He, who Mount Etna's ever blazing forge 200
 Keeps busy, with this tiny spark grows hot ;
 Phœbus himself, who from his bow directs
 Sure darts, is by the boy's more certain shafts
 Transfixed ; they fly alike to earth and heaven.

Nurse. Base lust, crime-maddened, feigns that
 love's a god, 205

Those who have wished great liberty have given
 Falsely the name of deity to lust.
 Yea, doubtless, Venus sends her son to roam
 Through every land ! He with his tender hand
 Prepares his shameless darts ! So great a realm 210
 The least of all the gods can claim ! Mad souls
 Created empty fables and have feigned
 Venus' divinity, the love god's bow.

Whoever too much joys in happy days
 And languishes in luxury desires 215
 Some unaccustomed pleasure, then comes lust,
 Ill-omened comrade of the fortunate :
 Accustomed feasts no longer satisfy,
 Nor home well-ordered, nor cheap wine to drink.
 Why does this plague, selecting dainty roofs, 220
 So rarely seek the poorer dwelling-place ?
 Why is it holy love abideth still
 In humble homes, that temperate passions sway
 The saner multitude of common folk
 To practise self-restraint and soberness ? 225
 Why do the rich and powerful desire
 More than is lawful ? Who already has
 Too much desires that he cannot have.
 Thou knowest what is fitting her who sits
 Upon the throne ; honor and fear the crown 230
 Of him who will return.

Phædra. Love's empery
 In me, I think, is greatest and no more
 I fear returns. He never more has seen
 The convex upper world who enters once
 The home of silence and perpetual night. 235

Nurse. Yet though Death bars his realm and
 though the gates
 Are ever guarded by the Stygian dog,
 Theseus e'er finds forbidden paths.

Phædra. Perchance
 Theseus will find indulgence for our love.

Nurse. He has been, even to a faithful wife, 240
 Most harsh. Antiope the Amazon
 Made proof of his hard hand. Yet couldst thou bend
 Thine angered husband's will, canst thou control

Hippolytus' hard heart? The very name
Of woman he abhors and flies them all; 245
Harshly he vows his years to singleness,
Shuns marriage: such the Amazonian race!

Phædra. It pleases me through woods and lofty
hills

To follow him, when on the snowy top
He stays his steps, or mocks the cruel rocks 250
With his swift foot.

Nurse. And will he stay his steps
And, softened, give himself to thy caress?
Will he for rites of unchaste Venus give
His chastity? Perchance his hate of thee
Is but the reason why he so hates all. 255
He cannot be by any prayers o'ercome.

Phædra. Wild is he but we know wild beasts are
tamed

By love.

Nurse. He'll flee thee.

Phædra. Though through seas he flee,
I'll follow him.

Nurse. Recall thy father's fate.

Phædra. My mother's I'll recall.

Nurse. He hates thy kind. 260

Phædra. I shall be free from rivals in his love.

Nurse. Thy husband will return—

Phædra. Pirithous' friend?

Nurse. Thy father'll come.

Phædra. For Ariadne's send.

Nurse. I pray thee by the silvery locks of age,
And by this heart o'erwearied with its cares 265
And by the breast which nursed thee, curb thy rage.
Call up thy strength; who wishes to be well

Is partly healed.

Phædra. Shame has not wholly fled
From my chaste spirit ; nurse, I yield to thee.
Let love that wishes not to be controlled 270
Be overcome. Thee will I not allow,
O honor, to be stained. One way remains
One only refuge from my misery ;
My husband I will follow, hinder crime
By death.

Nurse. O daughter, moderate the rush 275
Of thoughts unbridled, curb thy passion's force.
Now that thou thinkest thou art worthy death,
I think thee worthy life.

Phædra. Death is decreed ;
I only wait to seek the kind of death.
Shall I destroy my life with twisted noose, 280
Or fall upon the sword ? Or shall I leap
Headlong from Pallas' lofty citadel ?

Nurse. In my old age, shall I permit thee thus
To perish by a violent death ? Restrain
Thy impulse mad.

Phædra. No reason can prevent 285
The death of one who has resolved to die,
Who ought to die, we therefore arm our hand
To vindicate our chastity.

Nurse. Sole stay
Of wearied age, if thus hot passions press
Upon thy heart, think not of thy fair fame : 290
Fame seldom sides with truth ; kindest it is
To those who merit least and to the good
Most harsh. That soul intractable and stern
We will attempt ; my labor let it be
To meet the youth and bend his fierce, wild will. 295

SCENE III

Chorus.

O goddess, daughter of the stormy seas,
 Whom Cupids twain call mother, how thy boy,
 Ungoverned, wanton, smiling, from sure bow
 Lets fly his fiery shafts! the wound when given
 Shows no wide scar, but hidden deep within 300
 Devours the heart. That freakish boy can know
 No peace; he scatters swiftly through the world
 His arrows: all who see the rising sun,
 Or toward the bounds of Hesperus may dwell,
 Or underneath the cold Parrhasian Bear, 305
 Or fervid Cancer—ever-wandering tribes,—
 They know those fires. In youth he wakes fierce
 flames,
 Recalls to wearied age its long cooled heat,
 Inflames with unaccustomed fires the hearts
 Of virgins, and compels the gods to leave 310
 Their heaven and in disguise to dwell on earth.
 Phœbus Apollo shepherded the sheep
 Of Thessaly and put aside his lyre
 And called the bulls with unaccustomed pipe.
 How often has he taken milder forms, 315
 Who moves the sky and clouds: once, like a bird,
 White wings he moved, and with a sweeter voice
 Than dying swan he sang; then with fierce front,
 A wanton bull, he took upon his back
 The sportive maid, like slow oars moved his hoofs, 320
 Breasted the deep, and through his brother's wavas,
 An unaccustomed realm, he took his way,
 Made timid by the plunder rich he bore.

The shining goddess of the dark world burned
 With love, forsook the night, her bright car gave 325
 Into her brother's unfamiliar hand—
 He learned to drive the chariot of the night
 And turn a shorter circuit, while the wheels
 Trembled beneath the heavier weight they bore ;
 Nor did the night retain its wonted length : 330
 The day with tardy rising came to earth.
 Alcmena's son, his quiver laid aside,
 Put by the mighty lion's threatening spoil,
 Suffered his fingers to be decked with gems,
 Submitted to the comb his unkempt locks, 335
 And bound his limbs about with shining gold,
 While yellow sandals on his feet were tied,
 And with the hand accustomed to the club
 From the swift flying spindle drew the thread.
 The Persians saw, saw too the men who dwell 340
 In fertile Lydia's realm, the lion's skin
 Put by, and on the shoulders that had borne
 The skies the dainty Tyrian mantle laid.
 Believe the wounded : sacred is love's fire
 And all too potent. In whatever land 345
 The deep surrounds, where'er the bright stars run
 Their courses through the heavens, the cruel boy
 There reigns: the Nereid's king has felt his dart
 Within the depths of ocean, and the flame
 No waters could extinguish ; his hot fires 350
 The winged ones knew well ; the bull with love
 Instinct will boldly for the whole herd war ;
 The timid stags will fight, if for their does
 They fear ; the swarthy Indian trembles then
 At sight of the striped tiger ; the fierce bear 355
 Makes sharp his wounding tusks and all his mouth

Is foam ; the Carthaginian lion then
Tosses his mane and gives a dreadful roar,
The sign of love conceived. When love compels,
The forests echo with the murmur harsh. 360
The monsters in the restless sea feel love
And the Lucanian bull ; unto himself
Love arrogates all natures, nought is free,
And hatred perishes at Love's command ;
Old angers are by passion's fires quelled. 365
What can I further say—love overcomes
The cruel stepdame.

ACT II

SCENE I

Phœdra, Nurse, Chorus.

Chorus. Say, nurse, what news thou bear'st ; how
does the queen ?
How burn the cruel fires ?

Nurse. No hope can soothe
Such troubles, and the fires can know no end ; 370
Smothered, they still in secret grow more hot,
Conceal it how she will, her face betrays
Her passion ; from her eyes the fire breaks forth,
Her pale cheeks hate the light, her troubled soul
Is pleased with nothing, and uncertain grief 375
Drives her from place to place. She totters now
With weak steps, and she seems about to die :
Scarce can her neck sustain her drooping head ;
Now to repose she turns, but, sleep forgot,
In sad laments she wears away the night ; 380
She bids me lay her down, then raise her up,
To loose her hair, to bind it up again ;
Her dress she changes, ever with herself
Impatient. Not for food or health she cares ;
Her strength is failing, with uncertain steps 385
She moves ; no more her shining face is tinged
With health's rich red ; her eyes, which used to show
Some sparks of Phœbus' torch, no longer shine
With light which proves her race and native land ;

Her tears flow ever and with constant dew 390
 Keep moist her cheeks, as when from Taurus' top
 The melted snows flow down in warm, full streams.

But see, the palace opens ; she herself,
 Reclining on her golden couch, rejects,
 In her insanity, her wonted robe. 395

Phædra. The garments wrought of gold and
 purple, slaves,
 Remove ; bring not the red of tyrian conch,
 The web the distant Eastern peoples weave
 From fiber of the trees ; my flowing robe—
 Upgathered—let a girdle bind ; take off 400
 The necklace from my neck ; the pearls, rich gift
 Of Indian seas, shall not adorn my ears ;
 Free from Assyrian odors, let my hair
 Hang loose ; at random thus about my neck
 And shoulders shall my unbound locks flow free, 405
 And as I fly shall by the winds be blown ;
 The quiver in my left hand, in my right
 The sharp Thessalian spear. Like her who left
 The frozen seas and with her maiden hosts
 From Tanais and Mæotis touched the soil 410
 Of Athens—with loose hair and crescent shield
 She came, in guise like hers I seek the woods.

Chorus. Cease thy laments : complaints will not
 avail

Thy sorrow ; to the goddess of the woods,
 The guardian god of virgins, make thy prayer. 415

Nurse. Queen of the groves, who on the mountain
 tops

Lovest to dwell alone, we pray thee turn
 To better omens thy unkindly threats.
 O mighty goddess of the woods and vales,

Bright star of heaven, glory of the night, 420
 Who with alternate shining dost relume
 The world, O triformed Hecate, favoring shine
 On this attempt; sway thou th' unbending mind
 Of stern Hippolytus, that he may lend
 A willing ear; Oh, soften his hard heart, 425
 Teach him to love; Oh, charm his savage breast
 To feel responsive fires, to Venus' laws
 Submit his savage, harsh, and hostile soul.
 Exert thy power; come thus with shining face,
 Ride through the rifted clouds with crescent bright,
 Be no Thessalian incantation strong 431
 To draw thee from the starry sky of night
 Through which thou ridest: let no shepherd take
 Glory from thee. O goddess now invoked,
 Be present, look with favor on our prayers. 435
 Himself I see, who worships only thee;
 Alone he comes. Why hesitate? Chance gives
 Both time and place. Arts now must be employed.
 Why do I fear? It is not light to dare
 Crime's mandate. He who fears a queen's commands
 Must banish thought of honor from his breast; 441
 Poor servant of the royal will, indeed,
 Is loyalty to duty.

SCENE II

Hippolytus, Nurse.

Hippolytus. O faithful nurse, why hither dost thou
 toil,
 With aged, wearied steps; why bearest thou 445
 This troubled face, this set and anxious brow?
 Safe is my father, surely? Phædra safe?

Safe the two well-loved pledges of their love?

Nurse. Put by thy fears; most prosperous is the realm,

By happy fortune blessed, thy family thrives. 450

But live thou gladlier in this fair estate,

For anxious am I in my care for thee,

Because thou dost so harshly rule thyself.

He may be pardoned who, by fate compelled,

Is wretched, but if any uncompelled 455

Gives himself up to trouble willingly,

Tortures himself—who knows not how to use

The goods of fortune well may forfeit them.

Rather be mindful of thy years, give rein

To thy free spirit, lift on high thy torch 460

On festal nights, let Bacchus lighten care;

Enjoy thy youth, it flies with nimble feet.

Thy bosom now is free, love smiles on youth,

Oh, let thy heart be glad; why dost thou keep 465

A widowed couch? Make cheerful thy sad youth,

Make haste, let loose the reins, life's richest days

Allow not to flow from thee unenjoyed.

God for each age provides its office fit,

And leads from step to step; a happy brow

Befits the young, austerity the old. 470

Why keep thyself in check and strangle thus

Thy rightful nature? To the husbandman

That grain gives increase that with pliant stem

Runs riot in the joyous fields, the tree

Cut or restrained by no unfriendly hand 475

Rises above the grove with lofty top;

So upright natures will the better gain

True glory, if unhampered liberty

Nourish the noble soul. Why dost thou pass

An austere youth, fair Venus all forgot, 480
 Inhabiting the woods, fierce, ignorant
 Of life? Dost deem this part alone to be
 Assigned to men: that they should hardships bear,
 Should learn in the swift race to drive the horse, 484
 And wage, with streaming blood, most savage wars?
 What various modes of death drag mortals down
 And sweep away the throngs of men! the sea,
 The sword, and treachery! But shouldst thou deem
 That thou art safe from these—of our own will
 We seek black Styx before our time when youth 490
 Would pass its life in barren singleness.
 These peoples that thou seest will endure
 But one age, in themselves will come to nought.
 The first great parent of the world took care,
 When ravenous thus he saw the hand of fate, 495
 That ever a new offspring should replace
 The lost. Should Venus, who renews again
 The race destroyed, withdraw from man's affairs,
 The world were dark indeed, the sea would lie
 Bereft of fish, the air would have no birds, 500
 The woods no beasts, and all the ether be
 A path for sun and winds alone. Make haste
 To follow nature, the true lord of life;
 Frequent the city, live among thy kind.

Hippolytus. No other life there is more free from
 fault, 505
 More full of liberty, which better keeps
 The ancient customs, than the life of one
 Who loves the woods and leaves the city walls;
 No passion of the sordid soul inflames
 Him who to mountain tops commits himself 510
 Unstained; no voice of popular applause,

No common peoples false to honor's claims,
 No deadly envy, no inconstant fame.
 He serves no realm, nor, striving for a throne,
 Pursues vain honor, perishable wealth ; 515
 Free both from fear and hope, black hungry spite
 Attacks him not with his vile tooth, the crimes
 Nourished among the folk who dwell in towns
 He does not know, nor does he shrink afraid
 At every sound, nor coin false words, nor seek 520
 A home with columns numberless made rich,
 Nor proudly hide his rafters 'neath much gold ;
 Blood in abundance does not overflow
 His pious altars, nor a hundred bulls,
 Sprinkled with sacred meal, their white necks bow 525
 Beneath the sacrificial knife for him.
 His are the lonely fields, and innocent
 He roams beneath the open sky, he knows
 Only to build the cunning trap for beasts,
 When worn with labor, in Ilissus' stream 530
 He finds refreshment ; now he skirts the banks
 Of swift Alphæus, now through thickets dense
 Of the high groves he presses where flows down
 Through silent ways, with pure and shining shoals, 534
 Cold Lerna's stream, and where the querulous birds
 Murmur, whence softly smitten by the winds
 The mountain ash trees and the ancient beech
 Tremble. He loves to lie upon the banks
 Of winding rivers, or upon the sod
 To find sweet sleep, whether abundant streams 540
 Pour down swift floods or through fresh flowers flows
 The slender brook and murmurs a sweet song.
 Fruit gathered from the woods supplies his food,
 And berries gathered from the thickets quench

His thirst. I wish not royal luxuries ; 545
 The proud man drinks from golden cup, the cause
 Of anxious care ; how sweet it is to drink
 From hollowed hand the water of the spring !
 A surer rest refreshes him who rests
 On his hard bed secure : he does not seek, 550
 Shameless, in secret corners, in the dark,
 Intrigues, nor does he, fearful, hide himself
 In hidden dwellings : but the light and air
 He seeks ; with heaven for his witness lives ;
 Lives like the men of old who with the gods 555
 Mingled. No blind desire for gold was theirs,
 No judge with boundary stones set off their lands,
 Not yet were vessels, rashly confident,
 Sailing the deep ; only his own home seas
 Each knew. They did not build about their towns
 Vast walls and frequent towers, the warrior then 561
 Knew not to use stern weapons, nor to break
 Closed gates with warlike engines armed with stones ;
 Earth knew no master, nor was made a slave
 To the yoked oxen, but the fields untilled 565
 Brought forth their fruit, nor feared mankind's de-
 mands,
 The woods gave natural wealth, the shadowy caves
 Natural homes. Unholy thirst for gain,
 And headlong wrath, and lust which fires the heart
 Broke first this order ; fierce desire to rule 570
 Arose, the greater preyed upon the less,
 And might made right. Man then with naked hands
 Fought, and to weapons turned the stones and trees,
 He was not armed with the light cornel spear
 Pointed with iron, nor the sharp-edged sword, 575
 Nor crested helmet ; anger made such arms.

New arts by warlike Mars were learned, new ways
 To kill, and blood polluted every land,
 The sea was red with blood. Then everywhere
 Was crime forever found, no evil deed 580
 Was left untried; brother by brother's hand,
 Parent by son's, was slain, the husband fell
 By the wife's sword, and impious mothers killed
 Their children. I pass over stepdame's wrath.
 She is nowise less savage than the beasts. 585
 But woman was the leader in all wrongs;
 This bold artificer of crime beset
 All hearts: so many cities are consumed,
 So many peoples wage destructive war,
 So many kingdoms ruined lie o'erthrown, 590
 By reason of her vile adulteries.
 Of others I am silent—Ægeus' wife
 Medea shows how savage women are.

Nurse. Why make all guilty of the crimes of one?

Hippolytus. I hate, I fear, I loathe, I flee from all.
 Say it is reason, nature, passions wild, 596
 It pleases me to hate; sooner shall join
 Water and flame, and vessels sooner find
 In the uncertain Syrtes friendly depths,
 Sooner from farthest confines of the west 600
 Shall Tethys bring the day, and to the lambs
 Shall wolves prove kindly, than I, overcome,
 Turn friendly looks on woman.

Nurse. Love has oft
 About the stubborn cast his charms, and changed
 Their hate to love. Look at thy mother's realm, 605
 The Amazons felt Venus' yoke, thou prov'st
 This truth—one son of Amazonian blood.

Hippolytus. For mother lost, one consolation's
mine—

I may hate womankind.

Nurse. As cliffs resist

The waves, invincible on every side, 610

And hurl far back the waters that assail,

He spurns my words. But see, where Phædra comes
With headlong steps, impatient of delay.

Where leads her passion? What will fortune give?

Lifeless she falls; the color, as in death, 615

Deserts her face. O nursling, lift thy head,

Speak, see, Hippolytus embraces thee.

SCENE III

Hippolytus, Phædra, Nurse.

Phædra. Who gives me back my sorrow, brings
again

My passion's heavy weight upon my soul?

How gladly would I put an end to life! 620

Hippolytus. Why wish to flee the gift of life re-
stored?

Phædra. Be bold, my soul, accomplish now thy
will.

Though scorned, speak fearless words; who asks in
fear

Teaches denial. Of my sin great part

Is done: it is too late for modesty; 625

I have loved basely. If I follow up

This my attempt, perchance the marriage torch

May hide my crime; success makes certain sins

Respectable. Lo, now begin, my soul!

I pray a little nearer bend thine ear, 630

Lest any of thy comrades should be nigh.

Hippolytus. The place is free from any witnesses.

Phædra. My lips refuse a passage to my words :
'Tis a great pow'r that urges me to speak,
A greater holds me silent. O ye gods, 635
I call on you to witness: what I wish——

Hippolytus. And one who wishes something cannot
speak ?

Phædra. Light cares find words, but heavy ones
are dumb.

Hippolytus. Mother, commit thy cares to me.

Phædra. The name
Of mother is an honorable name, 640
And all too powerful ; a humbler one
Befits our love. Call me, Hippolytus,
Sister or slave, slave rather ; I will bear
All servitude. If thou shouldst bid me go
Through deepest snows, Mount Pindus' frozen top 645
Would give me no annoy, or if through fire
And hostile battle lines, I would not shrink
From giving to the ready sword my breast.
Take back the scepter to my charge consigned,
Receive me as thy slave ; it is not meet 650
A realm of cities by a woman's hand
Should be defended. Thou who flourishest
In the first bloom of youth, thy father's realm
Govern, O take thy suppliant to thy breast,
Pity the widow and protect the slave. 655

Hippolytus. This omen may the sovereign gods
avert !

My father presently will come again.

Phædra. The ruler of the realm whence none
return

And of the silent Styx has made no way
 Back to the upper air. Will he send back 660
 The violator of his marriage couch?
 Unless, perchance, now merciful to love,
 He, too, inactive sits.

Hippolytus. The upright gods
 Will truly give him back to earth. But while
 God holds our wish ungranted, I will shield, 665
 With duteous love, my brothers; care for thee
 So that thou'lt no more feel thyself bereft
 Of husband. I myself will fill for thee
 My father's place.

Phædra. O lover's trusting hope!
 Deceitful love! Have I not said enough! 670
 With prayers I will assail him. Pity me,
 Hear my unspoken prayers; I long to speak,
 Yet dare not.

Hippolytus. What is this that troubles thee?

Phædra. What thou wouldst hardly think could
 overtake.

A stepdame.

Hippolytus. Doubtful words thou utterest: 675
 Speak openly.

Phædra. My heart is all aflame
 With love and madness, fiercest fires burn hot
 Within my vitals, hidden in my veins,
 As o'er the lofty roof the swift flame plays.

Hippolytus. With wifely love for Theseus dost thou
 rage? 680

Phædra. Hippolytus, 'tis so; I love the form,
 The face that Theseus in his boyhood bore,
 When first his cheeks were darkened by a beard,
 And he beheld the winding labyrinth

Where dwelt the Theban monster ; by a thread 685
 He found his path. How glorious was he then !
 A fillet bound his locks, a modest blush
 Reddened his tender cheeks, on his soft arms
 Were iron muscles. Thy Diana's face,
 Or my Apollo's had he, or thine own ! 690
 Lo ! such he was when he made glad his foe,
 Thus proudly did he hold his head ; in thee
 Shines forth his manly beauty unadorned
 But greater ; all thy father is in thee,
 And yet some part of thy stern mother's look, 695
 A Scythian sternness on thy Grecian face.
 If thou with him had crossed the Cretan straits,
 For thee my sister would have loosed the thread.
 O sister, in whatever part of heaven
 Thou shinest, I invoke thee in a cause 700
 Both thine and mine ; one house has snatched away
 Two sisters, thee the father, me the son.
 Lo ! fallen at thy feet a suppliant lies,
 Child of a kingly race. Unstained I was,
 Pure, innocent—'tis thou hast wrought this change.
 See, to entreaty I have sunk : this day 706
 Must either end my sorrow or my life.
 Have pity on my love.

Hippolytus.

O king of gods,
 Dost thou so mildly hear, so mildly see
 Such baseness ? When will fly the thunderbolt 710
 Sent from thy hand, if thou art now unmoved ?
 Oh ! Let the firmament be rent apart,
 The daylight be by sable clouds concealed,
 The backward driven stars be turned aside
 To run inverted courses. Thou bright sun, 715
 Chief of the stars, canst thou behold the crimes

Of this thy offspring? Let thy light depart!
 Fly to the shades! Ruler of gods and men,
 Why is thy right hand idle, hurling not
 Thy triple thunderbolt against the world? 720
 Thunder upon me, pierce me with thy bolt,
 And swiftly burn me with thy smiting fires.
 Guilty I am, I have deserved to die,
 For I have pleased my stepdame. Lo, was I
 Worthy of incest deemed? Did I alone 725
 Seem to thee facile subject for thy crimes?
 Is this what my austerity deserved?
 O thou in crime surpassing all thy kind,
 More wicked than thy mother thou art found!
 She stained herself with lust most infamous, 730
 And though her crime was long a secret held,
 The two-formed offspring brought at last to light
 The mother's guilt—the child's ambiguous form
 Betrayed her crime—of that womb thou art born.
 O thrice, O four times happy call I those 735
 Destroyed and given to a violent death,
 By stepdame's hate and treachery o'ercome.
 Father, I envy thee! This scourge is worse,
 Worse than thy Colchian stepdame.
Phædra. I also recognize our family's fate,— 740
 Fleeing we find it; yet I o'er myself
 No more have power; I'll madly follow thee,
 Through flames and seas, through rocks and raging
 streams;
 Where'er thou turnst thy steps my love drives me.
 Again, O proud one, at thy feet I fall. 745
Hippolytus. Withdraw from my chaste body thy
 foul touch.
 Ha, what is this? She falls upon my breast!

The sword shall slay her, she shall meet just death.
See, I bend backward by the twisted hair
With my left hand her shameless head ; ne'er fell 750
Upon thy altars, goddess of the bow,
Blood shed in better cause.

Phædra. Thou giv'st me now
My wish, Hippolytus. Thou mak'st me sane.
Better is this than aught that I could wish.
I'm saved, with honor by thy hand I die! 755

Hippolytus. Live, yet go hence lest somehow, by
thy prayers,
Thou shouldst avail—and let this sword, defiled
By thee, my chaste side leave. Could Tanais' stream,
Or the Mæotis, or the Euxine sea,
Cleanse me—e'en Neptune could not wash away, 760
With all the waters of the mighty deep,
So great impurity. O wilderness!
O forests!

SCENE IV

Phædra, Nurse.

Nurse. The fault is known; why rest inactive? Up,
Throw back on him the blame ; sin must be hid 765
By sin. The safest way for one in fear
Is to attack. Since no one saw the crime,
Who shall be witness whether we first dared
Or suffered ill? Athenian women, haste!
Help, faithful band of slaves ; Hippolytus, 770
The ravisher, pursues, attacks the queen ;
He threatens death, and with the sword attacks
That virtuous one. Lo, headlong has he fled,
Affrighted, in his hasty flight has left

His sword ; we hold the token of his crime. 775
 First bring again to life the fainting form :
 Leave as they are her torn and loosened locks,
 Proofs of the crime attempted ; bear her forth
 Into the city. Mistress, take thou heart ;
 Why shouldst thou wound thyself and shun all
 eyes? 780
 Unchastity lies not in chance but thought.

SCENE V

Chorus.

As swiftly as the hurricane he fled,
 More swiftly than the hurricane that drives
 The clouds before it, swifter than swift flame
 That burns when meteors, driven by the winds, 785
 Send forth long fires. On thee, Hippolytus,
 Shall fame confer all beauty that aroused,
 In ages past, man's wonder ; lovelier shines
 Thy form than, when her crescent orbs have poured
 Their fires, Diana moves with glowing face 790
 All night, full-orbed, in her swift car through heaven,
 And lesser stars no longer show their face.
 So Hesperus, the messenger of night,
 At twilight shines, fresh bathed in ocean's waves ;
 So Lucifer drives darkness into flight. 795
 Thou Thyrsus-bearing Liber, Indian born,
 Whose unshorn locks shine with immortal youth,
 Who fightest tigers with thy vineclad staff,
 Who bindest with broad bands thy horned head,
 Thou art not fairer than Hippolytus ; 800
 Nor shouldst thou think too highly of thy form,
 For fame has blazoned through all lands his fame.

Whom Phædra's sister did to Bromius
Prefer.

O beauty, doubtful gift to mortals given, 805
A fleeting good that but a moment stays,
With what swift feet thou flyest. Not so soon,
When noon glows hot and night a brief course
runs,

Does burning summer's breath deprive the fields
Of all the comeliness of early spring. 810

As the pale flowers of the lily fall,
So falls the hair, the glory of the head ;
The glow which brightens on the tender cheek
Is in a moment gone, and one day spoils
The body's grace. A transitory thing 815

Is beauty : who may in so frail a good
With wisdom trust? Oh ! use it while thou mayst ;
Time silently destroys thee, and each hour
Is worse than that which just has passed away.
Why shouldst thou seek the desert's loneliness 820

Beauty is no more safe in pathless ways.
Thee will the saucy bands of wanton nymphs,
Accustomed to imprison lovely youths
In streams, surround at midday in the wood ;
And dryads, who upon the mountain tops 825

Follow some Pan, will in thy sleep assail ;
Or from the starry heavens, beholding thee,
The planet that since old Arcadian folk
Sprung loses power to drive her shining car.
Lately she blushed, no sordid cloud obscured 830

Her shining face ; but by her angry light
Disturbed, and fearing dark Thessalian charms,
We offered prayers—thou wast her trouble's cause,
And thou the cause of her unwonted stay ;

Because the goddess of the night saw thee, 835
 She checked her rapid course.
 Did bitter winds blow less upon thy face,
 Didst thou less oft expose it to the sun,
 Whiter than Parian marble would it shine.
 How pleasant is thine austere, manly face, 840
 The sternness of thy brow ! that glorious neck
 Thou mayst with bright Apollo's well compare,
 His hair about his shoulders flowing free,
 Knowing no bond, adorns and covers him,
 Thy hirsute front, thy shorter, uncombed locks, 845
 Become thee. Thou mayst with the gods contend
 In battles stern and conquer by thy strength,
 For equal is thy strength with Hercules',
 Broader thy breast than that of warlike Mars.
 If it had pleased thee on a horse to ride, 850
 Thou couldst have reined the Spartan Cyllarus
 More easily than Castor. With thy hand
 Make tense the bowstring, and with all thy strength
 Direct the shaft : the Cretan, apt to learn
 The art of shooting, not so far could send 855
 The slender arrow ; if in Parthian wise
 Thou shootest skyward, not a dart descends
 Without a bird : within the warm breast hid
 It brings its prey from out the very clouds.
 Seldom has man been beautiful and safe : 860
 Look at the ages. May a kindlier god
 Leave thee in safety, and thy beauty gain
 The aspect of unbeautiful old age !
 What will a woman's passion leave undared ?
 She plots 'gainst youth and innocence base crime. 865
 Behold the sinner ! she would find belief
 By her torn locks, the glory of her hair

sc. v]

PHÆDRA

203

Is all dishevelled, and her cheeks are wet ;
Her woman's cunning doth devise all frauds.
But who is this that comes with kingly form,
And lofty bearing? To Pirithous
How like his face, were not his cheeks so pale,
His unkempt hair so rough about his brow.
Ah! Theseus comes, returned again to earth!

870

ACT III

SCENE I

Theseus, Nurse.

Theseus. I have at last escaped the land where
reigns, 875

Eternal darkness, where night holds the dead
In its vast prison. Hardly can my eyes
Endure the brightness of the hoped-for day.
Four times the plow, gift of Triptolemus,
Has cut Eleusis' soil, four times the Scales 880
Have measured day the equal of the night,
Since first the doubtful toils of unknown fate
Have led me twixt the ills of life and death—
To me, though dead, a part of life remained,
The sense of ills. Alcides was their end. 885
He when he carried off from Tartarus
Th' unwilling dog, brought me as well to earth.
My wearied body lacks its ancient strength,
My footsteps tremble—ah! how hard the task
It was to seek the far-off upper air 890
From lowest Phlegethon, to flee from death
And follow Hercules.

What sound is this
Of lamentation strikes upon my ears?
Ah, some one, tell me! Grief, and tears, and woe,
And sad lament, e'en at my very door 895
Assail me; truly, worthy auspices

For one who as a guest from Hades comes.

Nurse. Phædra maintains her firm resolve to die,
She spurns our prayers, and is resolved on death.

Theseus. What cause is there for death? Why
should she die, 900
Her husband come again to life?

Nurse. E'en this
Hastens her death.

Theseus. I know not what may mean
The riddle of thy words. Speak openly.
What heavy sorrow weighs upon her mind?

Nurse. To none she tells it, she conceals her woe,
Determined that her ills shall die with her. 906
But haste, I pray thee, haste, for there is need.

Theseus. Unbar the portals of my royal house.

SCENE II

Phædra, Nurse, Theseus.

Theseus. O wife, dost welcome thus my late re-
turn?

Dost thus behold thy husband's longed-for face? 910
Let go the sword and take me to thy breast,
Tell me what makes thee seek to flee from life.

Phædra. Alas, great Theseus, by thy scepter's
might,
And by the inborn nature of thy sons,
And by thy coming from the shades again, 915
Yes, by thy ashes, suffer me to die.

Theseus. What reason urges thee to die?

Phædra. The fruit
Of death would perish if its cause were known.

Theseus. None other than myself shall hear the
cause.

Phædra. A virtuous wife dreads but her husband's
thoughts. 920

Theseus. Speak, hide thy secret in my faithful
breast.

Phædra. That which thou wouldst not have an-
other tell,

Tell not thyself.

Theseus. Death shall not have the power
To touch thee.

Phædra. Death can never fail to come
To him who wills it.

Theseus. Tell me what the fault 925
Thou must by death atone.

Phædra. The fault of life.

Theseus. And art thou not affected by my tears?

Phædra. The sweetest death is one by loved ones
mourned.

Theseus. Thou wilt keep silence? Then with
blows and chains

Thy aged nurse shall be compelled to speak 930
What thou wouldst not. Now cast her into chains,
Let blows drag forth the secrets of her mind.

Phædra. Cease, I myself will speak.

Theseus. Why turn away
Thy mournful face, why cover with thy robe
The tears that wet so suddenly thy cheek? 935

Phædra. O father of the gods, on thee I call
To witness, and on thee, bright light of heaven,
From whom our family springs; I strove to stand
Against his prayers, my spirit did not yield
Either to threats or steel. Yet to his force 940

My body yielded ; this the stain my blood
Must wash away.

Theseus. Who was it, tell me who
Thus stained our honor ?

Phædra. Him thou least suspectest.

Theseus. I earnestly entreat thee, tell me who.

Phædra. The sword will tell thee, that th' adulterer
left, 945

When by approaching tumult terrified,
He feared the gathering of the citizens.

Theseus. Alas, what crime is this which I behold ?
What awful thing is this I look upon ?

The royal hilt of ivory, carved and bright, 950
The glory of Actæon's race ! But he—
Where has he fled ?

Phædra. His fear and hasty flight
These slaves beheld.

Theseus. O holy piety !
O ruler of the sky, and thou who holdest
The kingdom of the waters ! Whence has come 955
This foul infection of my sinning son ?

Did Greek soil nourish him, or was he reared
On Scythian Taurus, and by Colchis' stream ?
The child repeats the father, and base blood
Bespeaks its primal source. This passion comes 960

From that armed race that hated ties of love
And, too long chaste, made common to the crowd
Their bodies. O vile people, to no laws
Of milder climes obedient ! Even beasts
Shun sins of love and with unconscious awe 965
Obey the laws of nature. Where that face,
That feigned majesty and manner stern,
That seeking after old austerity,

That sad affected gravity of age?
 O treacherous life, thou carriest hidden thoughts, 970
 And hidest with fair form a sinful soul ;
 A modest bearing covers shamelessness,
 Gentleness boldness, seeming goodness crime ;
 The false looks true, and harshness tender seems.
 O dweller in the woods, wild, virgin, chaste, 975
 Unconquered, hast thou kept thyself for me?
 Wilt thou first try thy manhood with such crime,
 In my own bed? Now to the gods above
 Be praises that Antiope has fallen,
 Struck by my hand ; that when I sought the Styx 980
 Thy mother was not left behind for thee.
 O fugitive, seek unknown climes afar,
 By ocean's plains shut off in earth's last bounds,
 Be hid within the region 'neath our feet.
 Shouldst thou have crossed the realms of bitter cold,
 And deep within its farthest nook be lost, 986
 Or, placed beyond hoar frost and winter snows,
 Have left behind cold Boreas' bitter threats,
 Thou yet shalt pay the penalty for crime ;
 Undaunted, fast upon thy flying steps, 990
 Through every lurking place I'll follow thee.
 Long, diverse, difficult, and pathless ways,
 Aye, ways impossible shall we pass through ;
 Nothing shall hinder. Whence I have returned
 Thou knowest. Whither arrows cannot go 995
 I'll send my curse. Neptune has promised me
 Three wishes by his favor gratified,
 And has confirmed his promise with an oath
 Sworn by the river Styx. My stern desire
 Perform, O ruler of the restless seas ! 1000
 Let not Hippolytus behold again

The day's fair light, but let the youth go down
 Among the wrathful spirits of the dead—
 Wrathful because of me. O father, bring
 Thy son thy dreaded aid—I had not asked 1005
 Of thy divinity this gift supreme
 But that such heavy evil pressed me sore.
 Even within the depths of Tartarus,
 Dread realm of Dis, and threatened by the wrath
 Of the infernal king, I still withheld 1010
 This wish. Fulfil thy promise. Why delay?
 Why, father, are thy waters silent still?
 Black clouds with driving wind should hide the sky,
 Snatch from the heavens the stars, upheave the deep,
 Arouse the monsters of the sea, call forth 1015
 The swelling floods from Ocean's farthest bounds!

SCENE III

Chorus.

O nature, mighty mother of the gods,
 And thou of fiery Olympus king,
 Who speedest through the flying firmament
 The scattered constellations, and the stars' 1020
 Uncertain courses, and the heavens that turn
 So swiftly, why continue with such care
 To keep the pathway of the airy heights
 That in its season winter's cold and snow
 Lay bare the forests, that the leafy shade 1025
 Returns, that summer's constellation shines
 And ripens with its fervid heat the grain,
 That milder autumn comes? But since thou rul'st,
 Since by thy power alone the balance weight

Of the vast universe revolves, why, then, 1030
No longer careful of the race of men,
Careless to punish evil or reward
The good, dost thou desert Hippolytus?
Fortune by ways unordered rules man's life;
The worse she cherishes, and blindly flings 1035
Her gifts, and base desire conquers law,
And fraud is king within the palace walls,
The populace rejoice to give the base
High office and to hate the very man
Whom they should honor. Rigid virtue finds 1040
The recompense of evil, poverty
Follows the pure in heart, and strong in crime
Th' adulterer reigns. O reputation vain!
O empty honor! But with headlong steps
Why comes the messenger with tear-wet cheeks! 1045

ACT IV

SCENE I

Theseus, Messenger.

Messenger. O hard and bitter lot, grim servitude !
Why am I called by fate to bring such news ?

Theseus. Be brave to speak, e'en of the bitterest
woes.

I have a heart not unprepared for grief.

Messenger. Alas, alas, Hippolytus is dead ! 1050

Theseus. The father knew long since his son was
dead.

Now dies the ravisher, but tell me how ?

Messenger. When he, a fugitive, with troubled steps,
Had left the city, taking his swift course

With flying feet, he quickly yoked his steeds, 1055

With bit and bridle curbed them ; with himself

Revolving many things, he cursed his land

And oft invoked his father. With loose rein

He shook his lash, impetuous. Suddenly

The depths of ocean thundered, and its waves 1060

Smote on the stars ; no wind blew on the sea ;

And nowhere were the quiet heavens stirred,

The tempest moved the placid deep alone.

No south wind e'er blew up Sicilia's straits

Like this, nor did the wild Ionian sea 1065

E'er rise before the northwest wind like this,

When cliffs shake with the beating of the waves,

And the foam flashes white on Leucas' top.
The great deep rose in billows mountain high,
But not for ships was this disaster planned, 1070
The earth was threatened ; not with gentle roll
The waves swept onward, some strange thing the surge
Bore on its burdened bosom. What new world
Slowly upheaves its head? What island new
Rises among the Cyclades? While thus 1075
Questioning we gazed, the whole wide ocean roared,
The cliffs on every side sent back the sound ;
His head all dripping with the driving spray,
Belching the flood from out his cavernous jaws,
Foaming and vomiting the waters forth, 1080
Through the great straits was dragged a monster vast ;
The mound of waters, smitten, sank amazed,
Opened, and on the shores spewed out a beast
Most terrible. The deep with landward rush
Followed the monster—at the thought I quake ! 1085
Ah, that huge body, what a form it had !
A great bull with blue neck, it lifted up
On a green brow a lofty crest, its ears
Were shaggy, and of changing hue its eyes ;
Such form the wild herd's lord on earth might have,
Or bull of ocean born. Its eyes shot flame, 1091
Wondrously with the ocean blue they shone ;
A thick mane grew upon its brawny neck,
With every breath it snorted ; breast and throat
Were green with clinging moss, its monster sides 1095
Were dotted with red lichens ; backward thence
It showed a monstrous form, a scaly fish,
Vast, horrible, dragging huge length along ;
Such are the fish that in the outer seas 1099
Swallow swift ships or wreck them. The land shook,

The frightened herds fled madly through the fields,
The shepherd was not mindful of the lambs,
The wild beasts in the wooded pastures fled,
The huntsmen stood alarmed and faint with fear.
Hippolytus, alone untouched by fear, 1105
With tight rein curbed his horses, checked their flight,
And with his well-known voice encouraged them.
A pathway wide bends through the parted hills
Into the fields, along the ocean strand ;
That mound of flesh there armed him for the fight,
Lashed up his rage, and having taken heart 1111
And stretched himself, he then essayed his strength ;
He sped along, scarce touching in his flight
The surface of the ground, and stayed his course
Before the frightened horses. With fierce look 1115
Thy son arose to meet its menaces,
Nor was he silent ; with loud voice he cried :
' My courage is not mastered by this threat,
To conquer bulls has been my family's task.'
The horses, disobedient to the rein 1120
And turning from the way, dragged off the car ;
Where'er blind terror drove them there they went ;
They fled among the rocks, but he, thy son,
Guided the chariot as the pilot guides
His vessel in a storm, nor lets it turn 1125
Aslant the wave, and by his skill escapes.
Now with tight rein he pulled upon the bit ;
Now with the twisted lash he smote the steeds.
The fish, a constant comrade, followed him,
Devouring now the ground with equal pace, 1130
Now lying in the way the car was turned,
And causing greatest fear on every side.
Nor farther was it possible to flee,

For the great horned monster of the deep
 Lying in wait with open mouth assailed. 1135
 Then the excited horses, mad with fear,
 Freed themselves from the guidance of the rein
 And rearing struggled from the yoke to tear
 Themselves. They hurled their burden to the ground,
 Headlong he fell, entangled in the lines; 1140
 The more he fought against the tightening noose,
 The more its knots were strengthened. What they'd
 done

The frightened horses felt, and, driverless,
 Where fear impelled they rushed with the light car.
 So through the air the horses of the sun, 1145
 Not recognizing their accustomed load
 And angry that a false god brought the day,
 Upon their devious course hurled Phaethon forth!
 The field was red with blood, his wounded head
 Rebounded from the cliffs, the brambles tore 1150
 His hair, hard rocks destroyed his lovely face,
 His illstarred beauty marred by many wounds
 Perished. Upon the wheels his dying limbs
 Were whirled about; pierced through the midst at
 last

By a burnt stake, upon its point was fixed 1155
 His trunk, the car was stayed a little while
 Held fast by its prone driver, and the steeds
 At the disaster stayed their hasty course,
 Then broke through all delays and tore away
 Their master. Brambles cut the lifeless form, 1160
 Each stinging brier and sharp thorn took part
 Of that torn trunk. The band of sorrowing slaves
 Followed through all the field where, dragged along,
 Hippolytus in bloody characters

Marked the long path, the howling dogs tracked out
 Their master's members, but most loving care 1166
 Could not find all. Is this his noble form ?
 Illustrious sharer of his father's throne,
 And certain heir, who like a star in heaven
 Shone bright, he now was gathered from all sides 1170
 For the last honors, for his funeral pyre
 Was brought together from the plain.

Theseus. O nature, all too potent, with what chains
 Thou holdst the parent's heart ! we cherish thee
 Although against our will. I wished to slay 1175
 The guilty one and now I weep his loss.

Messenger. What one has wished not always makes
 one glad.

Theseus. This is, I think, the farthest reach of ill :
 That chance should make me curse the thing I loved.

Messenger. Why wet thy cheeks with tears for one
 thou hat'st ? 1180

Theseus. Not that I lost but that I slew I weep.

SCENE II

Chorus.

How many chances rule the lot of man !
 Fortune against the humble least is roused,
 The god more lightly smites the little worth ;
 Obscurity finds peace and quietness, 1185
 The cottage offers undisturbed old age.
 The pinnacles that tower toward the skies
 Most feel the east wind and the south wind smite,
 Endure the savage north wind's menaces,
 The blowing of the rainy north-west wind ; 1190

The moist vale seldom feels the thunderbolt,
 But lofty Caucasus, the Phrygian grove
 Of mother Cybele, are often shaken
 By thundering Jove's attack, for Jupiter,
 Fearing their nearness to his heavenly heights, 1195
 Aims there his bolts. Beneath the humble roofs
 Of lowly homes great tumults never come.
 Fickle and restless is the hour's flight,
 And faith with none does flying fortune keep.
 Theseus, who left the gloomy shades of night, 1200
 And sees the starry skies, the sunny day,
 Must sadly mourn his sorrowful return,
 And find his native land more full of grief
 Than dread Avernus.
 Chaste Pallas, venerated by the Greeks, 1205
 Because thy Theseus sees the upper world
 And has escaped the waters of the Styx,
 Thou owest to thy robber uncle naught ;
 The tyrant finds hell's number still the same.
 What voice from out the mourning palace sounds ?
 With weapon drawn why comes sad Phædra forth ? 1211

ACT V

SCENE I

Theseus, Phædra.

Theseus. What fury animates thee, and with
grief?

Wherefore that sword, and why those sad laments?
Why beat thy bosom for such hated dead?

Phædra. Me, me, O cruel ruler of the seas, 1215
Assail, and send the blue sea's awful shapes
To war on me—whate'er far Tethys bears
Within its inmost bosom, whatsoever
Ocean, embracing with its restless waves
The world, conceals within its farthest flood! 1220
O Theseus, ever most unfeeling one, ✓
Thou ne'er returnest safely to thy home.
Father and son must pay for thy return
By death; thou, ever guilty, dost destroy
Thy home with love or hate. Hippolytus, 1225
Such as I made thee do I see thee now?
Did Sinis or Procrustes scatter thus
Thy members, or some savage Cretan bull,
Half man, half beast, refilling with its roar
The labyrinth of Dædalus, destroy 1230
With its great horns? Oh! whither now is fled,
My star, the glory of thy brilliant eyes?
Dost thou lie lifeless? Come, one moment come,
And hear my words, 'tis nothing base I speak!

With my own hands I'll pay thee what I owe, 1235
 Into this sinful breast will thrust the sword,
 Will by one deed take Phædra's life away,
 And cleanse her from her sin, and follow thee
 Madly through floods, through Tartarean lake,
 Through Styx and fiery rivers. Let me die— 1240
 Let me placate the spirit of the dead :
 Receive the lock of hair here cut for thee,
 It was not lawful that our souls should wed,
 But still, perchance, we may in fate be one.
 Let me, if chaste, die for my husband's sake, 1245
 And if unchaste, die for the loved one's sake !
 Shall I approach my husband's marriage bed
 That am with such crime stained? This one sin
 lacked :

That I, as one unstained, should still enjoy
 That bed as if it were my right. O death, 1250
 The only solace for the pains of love ;
 O death, last grace of injured chastity,
 To thee I fly, take me to thy calm breast !
 Hear me, Athena, let his father hear—
 He than the cruel stepdame sterner found— 1255
 Falsely have I accused him of a crime
 Which I myself in my mad heart conceived ;
 I spoke a lie. Thou, father, hast in vain
 Sought punishment ; of all incestuous crime
 The youth is pure, unstained and innocent. 1260
 Recover now thy former spotless fame,
 The sinful breast lies bare for justice' sword ;
 My blood is offered to a holy man.

Theseus. What thou should'st do,
 O father, for thy son thus snatched away, 1265
 Learn from his stepdame. Seek the Acheron !

O jaws of pale Avernus and ye caves
 Of Tanarus, ye waves of Lethe's stream
 So welcome to the wretched, stagnant fens,
 Hide ye the wretched one, with endless woes 1270
 O'erwhelm! Ye cruel monsters of the deep,
 Great sea, and whatsoever Proteus hides
 Within the farthest corner of his waves,
 Be present now; into the whirling deeps
 Drag me, so long rejoicing in such crimes. 1275
 O father, ever all too easily
 Approving of my wrath, I am not meet
 To suffer easy death—I who have strewn
 My son's torn members in unheard of ways
 Through all the fields. Crime did I truly find 1280
 When, as the harsh avenger, I pursued
 One falsely charged with crime. The seas and
 stars
 And land of shadows by my crimes are filled;
 No place remains, me the three kingdoms know.
 Have I returned for this? Was upward way 1285
 Opened but that I might behold the dead,
 That, widowed, childless, I might with the torch
 Light the sad funeral pyres of wife and son?
 Giver of light, Alcides, take thy gift
 Back to the sable groves of shadowy Dis, 1290
 Restore me to the Manes whence I came.
 Me miserable! Vainly I invoke
 The death that I deserted. Bloody one,
 Artificer of death, contrive thou now
 And bring to light unheard of means of death, 1295
 Inflict upon thyself just punishment.
 Shall a great pine be bent until the top
 Touches the earth, then, being freed again,

Upspringing, bear me with it to the stars?
 Or shall I fling myself from Sciron's cliffs? 1300
 Yet heavier punishment than that I've seen,
 Which Phlegethon compels the guilty souls
 Prisoned within its circling waves of fire
 To suffer: well I know the dwelling place,
 The bitter penalties reserved for me. 1305
 Ye guilty souls give place and let the rock
 That to the ancient son of Æolus
 Gives ceaseless labor weigh these shoulders down,
 Weary these hands; let rivers, flowing near
 My thirsty lips, ever elude their touch. 1310
 Let the fierce vulture, leaving Tityus,
 Hover about my liver and increase
 My punishment. Mayst thou have rest at last,
 Thou father of my friend Pirithous:
 On the swift flying wheel that never stays 1315
 Its turning let my limbs be whirled about.
 Earth, open! Dire chaos, take me back!
 Take me! The pathway to the shades of hell
 Is mine by better right; I follow him!
 O thou who rul'st the spirits of the dead, 1320
 Fear not, for we who come to thee are chaste.
 Receive me to thy everlasting home,
 There will I stay. My prayers the gods hear not,
 But had I asked their help in evil deeds,
 How ready had they been!

Chorus. Eternity 1325
 Is thine, O Theseus, for lament; pay now
 The honors due thy son, and quickly hide
 In earth his scattered members so dispersed.
Theseus. O hither, hither bring the dear remains,
 Give me the parts from many places brought. 1330

Is this Hippolytus? The crime is mine,
 'Twas I destroyed thee ; and not I alone—
 A father, daring crime, I called to aid
 My father, I enjoy a father's gift!
 How bitter is such loss to broken age ! 1335
 Embrace whatever of thy son is left,
 And clasp him to thy bosom, wretched one.

Chorus. O father, in their rightful order place
 The mangled body's separated parts,
 Restore the severed members to their place. 1340
 Lo, here the place the strong right hand should
 rest,

And here the left that learned to hold the reins ;
 I recognize the marks on his left side.
 How great a part is absent from our tears !

Theseus. For this sad duty, trembling hands, be
 strong ; 1345

O cheeks be dry, and let abundant tears
 Be stayed, the while I count my son's torn limbs,
 And form his body. What is this I see,
 Lacking in beauty, base, with many wounds?
 What part of thee it may be I know not, 1350
 Yet part of thee it is. Here, here repose,
 Not in thine own but in a vacant place.
 Is this the face that like the bright stars shone?
 His eyes that overcame his enemy?
 Thus has his beauty fallen? Bitter fate! 1355
 O cruel kindness of the deity!

And is my son thus given back to me,
 As I have wished? O son, in fragments borne
 Forth to thy burial, from thy father take
 These funeral rites; thee shall the fire burn. 1360
 Lay wide the house with dismal murder filled,

Let Mopsopia sound with loud lament.
Ye, to the royal funeral pyre bring flame,
And ye, seek out his body's scattered parts
Through all the fields. When she is buried, 1365
[Turning to Phædra's body] Let earth lie heavy on
her, let the soil
Weigh down her impious head !



ŒDIPUS

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

ŒDIPUS.

CREON.

TIRESIAS.

PHORBAS.

JOCASTA.

MANTO.

A CORINTHIAN.

MESSENGER.

CHORUS.

SCENE: *Thebes.*

ŒDIPUS

ACT I

SCENE I

Œdipus, Jocasta.

Œdipus. Already night has fled, dim dawns the day
The morning star looks darkly through the gloom,
The woful light in baleful flame appears
And sees our homes made desolate by plague ;
And day will show what havoc night has wrought. 5
Who would be glad at being made a king ?
Deceitful honor, how thy flattering face
Conceals untold misfortune. As the ridge
Of mountain summits by the wind is swept ,
As rocky headlands, even when the sea 10
Is calm, by breakers at their jutting base
Are lashed, so fortune's storms attack the heights
Of kingly power. 'Twas but right to flee
The scepter of my father Polybus.
An exile, free from care and unafraid, 15
(I call to witness heaven and the gods)
Idly I happened on a kingdom's throne.
I fear an impious crime : lest slain by me
My father die ; for so admonished me
The Delphic laurel, and of greater crime 20
Forewarned me. Could there be a greater crime

Than murder of a father? Woe is me,
 It shames me but to give the crime a voice ;
 For Phœbus threatens a marriage infamous,
 A parent's bed dishonored by a son, 25
 Incestuous union, and a bridal torch
 That fits such wedding feast. This fear it is
 Made me an exile from my father's house.
 Not as a fugitive I left my home,
 But, fearing to myself to trust myself, 30
 Nature, thy holy laws I made secure.
 Although thou loath'st the sin, yet none the less
 Fear that which seems to be impossible,—
 I greatly feared and trusted not myself.

E'en now the fates prepare some grievous ill — 35
 This plague, so hostile to the Cadmean land,
 And spreading such disaster, spares but me ;
 For what worse evil then am I reserved?
 Amid the city's ruins, 'mid new deaths,
 That ever with new tears must be bewept, 40
 'Mid slaughter of my people, I stand safe—
 Apollo's hand is plain. How can I hope,
 Destined for crimes like these to hold secure,
 A healthful realm? 'Tis I infect the air.
 No gentle wind with cool breath cherishes 45
 The hearts that labor under burning suns ;
 Light Zephyr blows not ; Titan, pressing close
 The lion of Nemea's flanks, augments
 The dog-star's heat ; the river beds are dry ;
 The green deserts the herbage ; Dirce's fount 50
 Fails, and Ismenus' stream is but a thread
 Whose waters scarce make moist the barren shoals ;
 Apollo's sister moves obscured through heaven,
 And earth is sad and wan with clouded day ;

No night serene is lighted by the stars, 55
But o'er the earth brood black and heavy mists ;
Infernal darkness veils the heavenly heights,
The dwelling of the gods ; her ripened fruit
Ceres withholds—just as the golden ear
Lifts itself trembling on the thirsty stalk 60
The grain dies fruitless ; nought remains secure
From ruin ; every age and sex alike
Is smitten, son with father, youth with age,
In ghastly ruin, and one funeral pyre
Serves wife and husband, so that neither mourns 65
Nor weeps beside the bier of a dead spouse.
Nay more, the rigor of such heavy woes
Makes dry the eyes, and tears, the wonted gift
Of sorrow, may not fall. Here going forth,
A grieving father carries out his child ; 70
Or there a grief-stunned mother brings her son,
To burn his body on the last dread fire ;
Swiftly they go, returning to perform
The same sad office for another child.
New sorrow rises from the sorrow's self, 75
And they who came to bear the dead away
Fall dead ; on strangers' pyres their forms are burned,
And fire made common spoil ; woe knows no shame ;
No separate tombs enclose the holy dead ;
It is enough the bodies should have blazed, 80
How small a part to ashes really burns !
No space remains for graves, the woods refuse
To furnish funeral pyres for the dead.
When once the plague has smitten, art nor vows
Can save. Physicians fall while minist'ring, 85
And sickness seizes him who offers help.
Prostrate before the altars here I stretch

My suppliant hands, implore a speedy death ;
 I would outrun my country's overthrow,
 Die ere all perish, live not as the last 90
 Of all my kingdom. O too cruel gods!
 O heavy lot! Death, that so swiftly smites
 My people, is to me alone denied,
 Lay down the scepter from thy fatal hands ;
 Flee from the tears, the funerals, and the air 95
 So full of pestilence, which thou, a guest
 Ill-omened, brought'st with thee ; fly swiftly hence,
 Although to home and parents thou must flee.

Jocasta. Why add lament to sorrow? knowest thou
 not

205.1
 He
 watch
 St.
 'Tis kingly to endure unflinchingly 100
 Whatever adverse fortune choose to give?
 Although prosperity decline, the strength
 Of mighty empire totter to its fall,
 The king should stand unshaken ; it is base
 To turn the back to fortune.

Edipus. Far from me 105
 Be the reproach of sins of cowardice ;
 My spirit does not know ignoble fear.
 If hostile dart, if bristling might of war
 Attack me, I would boldly hold my own—
 Against the Giants even. When the Sphinx 110
 Proposed her riddle, I was not afraid ;
 Nor did I fear before the bloody jaws
 Of that dread prophethess, though all the ground
 Was white with scattered bones ; and when she stooped
 From the high cliff, and, ready for her prey, 115
 Spread her broad wings, and, lashing with her tail,
 Threatened to pounce as a fierce lion does,
 I asked her for her riddle ; o'er my head

Wildly she sang, impatient ground her teeth,
 And tore the rocks with claws that fain would tear 120
 My heart. The twisted riddle of the Sphinx,
 The double speech, the baleful prophecy
 That fierce bird sang, I solved. Thou foolish one,
 Why yearn too late for death? 'Twas possible
 Then to have died; this scepter was the meed 125
 Of honor, and Jocasta the reward
 Allotted thee for slaying of the Sphinx.
 But from the ashes of the monster comes
 This curse against me, and that perished plague
 Now ruins Thebes. No safety now remains, 130
 If Phœbus does not show us safety's path.

SCENE II

Chorus of Theban women.

O noble sons of Cadmus' race, ye die
 With all your city! Wretched Thebes! alas,
 Thy homes are left unto thee desolate.
 Bacchus, thy soldiery is snatched away 135
 By death—those gallant comrades who dared ride
 To farthest India and the distant east,
 And plant thy banners on earth's utmost bounds;
 They saw the woods of Araby the blest
 Fragrant with breath of cinnamon; they saw 140
 The flying Parthian cavalry who shoot
 Their treacherous arrows backward as they flee;
 They saw that Red Sea's shore, where first the sun
 Springs from the waters, bringing up the day,
 There where the naked Ethiopian feels 145
 His nearer flame.

Sons of a race unconquered, thus we fall ;
 We pass snatched hence by cruel destiny ;
 Each hour new sacrifice is led to death ;
 The long train of the sad procession hastes 130
 Down to the shades, and all the ways are blocked,
 And, for the throngs that seek the place of tombs,
 The seven gates of Thebes are not enough ;
 Corpse upon corpse the bodies of the dead
 Are heaped together. 155
 The stolid sheep feel first the touch of death,
 The sick lambs scarcely crop the juicy herbs.
 The priest stands ready for the sacrifice,
 But as his hand is raised to strike the blow,
 The bull that waited it with gilded horns 160
 Sinks slowly ; as the heavy ax descends,
 Relaxed beneath the blow his huge neck falls,
 But yet by no red blood the steel is stained,—
 A humor black and foul flows from the wound.
 The horse, o'erwearied in the course, drops dead 165
 And throws his rider prone ; what sheep still live
 Lie helpless in the fields ; the bull grows weak
 Among the herd ; the shepherd fails his flock,
 Fainting and dying 'mid the wasting young ;
 The hinds no longer fear the plundering wolf ; 170
 No more the angry lion roars ; no more
 The shaggy bear is fierce ; the lurking snake
 Loses its sting, shrivels and perishes,
 Its venom dried.
 The woods no longer from their leafy boughs 175
 Shed dusky shadows on the mountain side ;
 No more the land grows green with springing grain ;
 No more the vines' full branches downward bend
 With weight of Bacchus' gifts ; earth feels our woes.

The Tartarean band of sisters, armed 180
 With fatal torch, have burst apart the gates
 Of Erebus profound, the Phlegethon
 Has changed its course, and with Sidonian streams
 The Styx is mingled. Black Death's eager jaws
 Gape for us, wide he spreads his mighty wings. 185
 The hard old ferry-man who guides the boat
 That plies between the gloomy river's banks,
 Sore taxed with frequent poling to and fro,
 Can hardly lift his over-wearied arms,
 Too weak to bear the thronging dead across. 190
 'Tis said the dog of hell has burst his chains,
 Forged of Tænarian iron, and now haunts
 Our country ; earth makes moan, and misty forms,
 Larger than human, wander through the groves ; 194
 The Cadmean woods twice trembled and shook down
 Their weight of snow, and twice the troubled fount
 Of Dirce welled with blood, Amphion's dogs
 Howled on the silent night.
 Oh, strange and dreadful kind of death, far worse
 Than death itself! A heavy lassitude 200
 Binds fast our listless limbs, the feverish red
 Flames in the face, and spots defile the brows ;
 The body's citadel, the head, is burnt
 With scorching heat, the cheeks are swelled with blood,
 The eyes are fixed, and on the drooping limbs 205
 A foul corruption feeds, a ringing noise
 Sounds in the ears, black blood flows from the nose
 And bursts the veins agape ; quick, racking groans
 Are wrung from quivering hearts ; some seek to cool
 Their glowing fever on the icy rocks, 210
 And some in empty homes, the watcher gone,
 Make haste to seek the fountain, but their thirst

Grows as they drink. Before the altars lie
A prostrate throng and pray for speedy death,
For death alone the gods consent to give. 215
They crowd the shrines, not with their votive gifts
T' appease the wrathful gods, but with themselves
To glut the greedy anger of the gods.

ACT II

SCENE I

Ædipus, Creon, Chorus.

Ædipus. Who is it hither comes with hasty steps?
Is it not Creon, great in deed and race? 220
Or does my sick soul view the false as true?

Chorus. 'Tis Creon—he whom all desire to see.

Ædipus. I tremble, for I dread the trend of fate; ✓
My fearful heart is torn by two desires :
Where joy with sorrow mingled lies in doubt 225
The soul, uncertain, longing still to know,
Still fears to know. Dear brother of my wife,
If any hope thou bringst to wearied hearts,
I pray thee now be swift to tell it me.

Creon. The oracle a doubtful answer gave. 230

Ædipus. Who gives us doubtful safety, gives us none.

Creon. The Delphic oracle is wont to hide
Her secret meaning in a double sense.

Ædipus. Though it be doubtful, tell it, since to read
Dark sayings is to Ædipus allowed. 235

Creon. The god commands that murder of the king
Should be atoned by exile, Laius' death
Avenged ; not otherwise shall cloudless day
Arise, nor any breathe untainted air.

Ædipus. Who slew the noble king? what man is he
Whom Phœbus names? Speak, that he may atone. 241

Creon. I pray it may not be unsafe to tell

The horrid tale of what I saw and heard.
 A numbness lies upon my limbs, chill fear
 Congeals my blood : when I, with suppliant feet, 245
 Within the temple of Apollo came,
 And with observance due had lifted up
 Pure hands, and made my prayer, Parnassus' peak
 Thundered, Apollo's drooping laurel shook,
 And swayed its leaves, the holy stream that flows 250
 From the Castalian fountain ceased ; the seer,
 Moved by the god, shook back her unkempt locks,
 Nor had she reached the cave when from its depths
 A thundering voice greater than human came :
 ' The kindly stars will not again return 255
 To Cadmus' city till the stranger guest
 Whom even as a child Apollo knew—
 The stranger guilty of king Laius' death—
 Shall flee from Dirce. Thou may'st not retain
 The pleasant fruit of slaughter, long enjoyed ; 260
 Thou with thyself shalt war, and shalt bequeath
 War to thy sons, so basely hast thou turned
 Again to her who bore thee.'

Œdipus. At command

I am prepared to do the god's behests,
 For it is meet this man be offered up 265
 To Laius' ashes, that the sanctity
 Of kings be not by treachery profaned ;
 / For kings have need to guard the life of kings.
 Him who alive was feared none think of dead.

Creon. 'Twas terror drove out thought of him who
 died. 270

Œdipus. Can any fear prevent a reverent care ?

Creon. The Sphinx, her gloomy song of threatened
 crime.

Ædipus. This wrong, at heaven's command, shall be
avenged.

Ye gods who look with favor on our realm,
 Whoe'er ye be, both thou whose laws control 275
 The whirling firmament, thou brightest star
 Of heaven, who governest the twice six signs
 Diversely, whose swift wheel rolls off slow time ;
 And thou Diana, wanderer through the dark,
 Who still returnest to thy brother's side ; 280
 Thou too almighty ruler of the winds,
 Who driv'st thy azure car through ocean's plains ;
 And thou whose dwelling shuns the holy light,
 Be present. Grant that he who slew the king
 May find no peaceful home, no household gods, 285
 Nor hospitable land ; may he lament
 A shameful marriage, offspring odious ;
 Let him commit the crime from which I fled—
 What worse could it be possible to wish ?
 Nor shall a place of grace remain for him. 290
 I swear by this my kingdom, where I dwell
 A guest, and by the kingdom that I left,
 And by my household gods ; by thee I swear,
 Great father Neptune, who dost softly bathe
 My dear land's double coast with gentle waves ; 295
 By thee I swear, who camest to inspire
 The Delphic priestess' words of prophecy :
 So may my father on his lofty throne
 Live out his age secure in length of days,
 And Merope no other marriage know 300
 Than that of Polybus, as I will show
 The guilty man no favor. Tell me where
 The impious crime was done, did Laius fall
 In open war or slain by treachery ?

Creon. He sought the leafy grove, Castalia's fount,
 Treading the way o'ergrown with thorny vines ; 306
 From thence three roads stretch forth into the plain ;
 One leads through Phocis, land to Bacchus dear,
 Whence high Parnassus lifts its double peak
 And, seeking heaven, rises from the fields 310
 By gentle slopes ; another to the land
 Of Sisypus, whose shores two oceans wash ;
 Into the valley lands of Olenos
 The other leads, and, by a sinuous course
 Meeting at last the wandering waters, slips 315
 Across the cool ford of th' Elean stream ;
 Here unexpectedly, when all seemed safe,
 Robbers assailing, wrought the hidden crime.
 But summoned by Apollo's oracle,
 Tiresias comes in haste, with trembling steps, 320
 And Manto, his companion, hither leads
 The sightless seer.

SCENE II

Ædipus, Tiresias, Manto, Creon in the background.

Ædipus. Near to Apollo, sacred to the god,
 Speak, tell the answer ; whom does justice seek ?

Tiresias. In truth it hardly fits thee, great-souled one,
 To wonder that the tongue is slow to speak, 326
 And asks delay ; truth, to the blind, lies hid.
 Yet whither Phœbus or my country calls
 I follow, and Apollo's oracle
 Shall be made known. If youth's hot blood were mine,
 I might receive the god within my breast ; 331
 But to the altars bring the white-backed bulls

That never on their necks have borne the yoke ;
 And thou, who to a father reft of light
 Art guide, my daughter, tell me what the marks 335
 Of the prophetic sacrifice.

Manto. There stands,
 Fronting the altars, an abundant gift.

Tiresias. In hallowed words invoke the gods on high,
 Heap up the altars with the fragrant gift
 Of eastern incense.

Manto. On the sacred fire 340
 The frankincense has been already cast.

Tiresias. What of the flame ? Has it yet seized the
 gift ?

Manto. It shone a moment with a sudden light,
 Then fell again as suddenly.

Tiresias. But say
 If clear and bright the fire now burns, if shoots 345
 To heaven a straight, pure flame, until its crest,
 Upstreaming, melts away in liquid air ?
 Or does it fluttering creep about the sides
 And flicker dark with undulating smoke ?

Manto. Th' inconstant flame has not one form
 alone : 350

As Iris, the rain-bearer, intertwines
 Her various colors, and her bow, stretched forth
 Across the heavens, by its painted arc
 Announces showers—you may not tell the tints,
 Blue mingles with the gold, then disappears 355
 And glows again blood red, then sinks at last
 Into the dark. The stubborn flame is split
 In two, and one discordant half divides
 Again. I shudder, father, at the sight !
 To Bacchus the libation has been poured, 360

And see, it turns to blood ; a heavy smoke
 O'erhangs the king, is densest round his head,
 And hides the murky light with heavy cloud.
 Father, what means it? Say.

Tiresias.

What can I say?

Amid the tumult of a mind confused 365
 I grope ; what shall I say? The ills are dire,
 But hidden. By a less uncertain sign
 The gods are wont to manifest their wrath ;
 What is it that they wish yet do not wish
 Should be revealed? Why hide they thus their wrath?
 Something there surely is that shames the gods. 371
 Bring near the victims, scatter on their necks
 The salted meal : do they with placid mien
 Suffer the priest's approach and lifted hand?

Manto. Turned toward the east, the bull throws
 back his head, 375

Shrinks from the day, and, overcome with fear,
 He dreads the sun's face and her radiant beams.

Tiresias. By one blow fall they, to the earth struck
 down?

Manto. The heifer gave herself to death, o'erthrown
 By the first blow ; the bull, by two strokes felled 380
 Rolls madly here and there, until at last,
 Wearied, his struggling life is forced away.

Tiresias. Springs the blood swiftly from a narrow
 cut,

Or does it slowly moisten the deep wounds?

Manto. The blood in rivers from the heifer's side
 Flows forth, but from the bull's deep wound the
 stream 385

Is scant, though from his mouth and eyes there wells
 Much blood.

Tiresias. An unpropitious sacrifice
Foretells most terrible events. But say
What signs undoubted do the entrails show? 390

Manto. My father, what is this? The inward parts
Not with the wonted gentle quivering
Are moved, but shake the hand in which they're held.
And from the veins new blood flows forth ; the heart
Is sick and withered, and lies covered up ; 395
The veins are leaden blue, the bowels lack
The greater part, the liver is decayed
And covered up with froth of inky gall,
And, omen ever fraught with ill for kings,
See from the lobe two equal heads arise ; 400
A slender membrane covers either head
Denying lurking place for hidden things ;
The hostile side in sturdy strength lifts up
Its seven veins ; all these an oblique ridge
Cuts off, preventing them from turning back. 405
Changed is the natural order, nothing lies
Where it is wont, inverted is the whole :
Not on the right is found the bloody lung,
Breather of air, nor on the left the heart ;
Nor does the membrane with its soft embrace 410
Surround the viscera's rich folds, no law
Is here observed, and nature's ways are changed.
Let us examine whence this order strange.
What shocking prodigy is this I see?
In a new place, an unaccustomed way, 415
The foetus of the unwed heifer fills
The parent, moves its members with a moan,
Stirs with a quivering motion its weak limbs ;
Black blood pollutes the tissues, the torn trunk
Attempts to move, the lifeless heifer seeks 420

To rise and with its horns attack the priest ;
 The entrails fly the hand ; that sound you hear
 Is not the lowing of the noble herd,
 Is not the voice of the affrighted flocks—
 The altars shake, the altar-fires resound. 425

Œdipus. Say freely what these fearful signs presage,
 Unfrighted shall my ears drink in thy words.

Tiresias. Those ills for which thou seekest help,
 thou'lt grudge
 Thyself to help.

Œdipus. Tell that high heaven ordains ;
 What hand destroyed the king, defiled the realm ? 430

Tiresias. Alas, not wandering bird that on light wing
 Cleaves the blue depth of heaven, nor fibre torn
 From out the living breast can tell the name.

Another way must needs be found, the king
 Must from the region of eternal night 435

Be called, must be sent forth from Erebus,
 That he may name the author of his death ;
 The earth must open and relentless Dis
 Must be invoked, and hither must be brought
 The dwellers of the nether Styx. Declare 440
 To whom thou wilt this office delegate ;
 For as the king 'tis not permitted thee
 To see the land of shades.

Œdipus. This task demands,
 Creon, thy care, for thou art next myself.

Tiresias. While open wide we lay the Stygian
 depths, 445

Ye Thebans, raise a song in Bacchus' praise.

SCENE III

Chorus of Thebans.

Wreathe with the nodding vine your flowing locks,
 Take the Nyscan thyrsus in your hands.
 O Bacchus, light and glory of the skies,
 Be present while the noblest in thy Thebes 450
 Raise supplicating hands and prayers to thee;
 With favoring glance turn hitherward thy head
 So virginal, dispel with starry look
 The clouds, the menaces of Erebus
 And eager fate. To twine the flowing hair 455
 With vernal flowers well beseemeth thee;
 To bind about thy head the Tyrian crown,
 Or wreath with berried ivy thy smooth brows;
 To let thy loosened hair fall unrestrained,
 Or in a careful knot to bind it back. 460
 Thus didst thou grow, fearing a stepdame's wrath,
 Under false seeming; wore thy flaxen locks
 In virgin fashion, girded up thy robe
 And flowing syrma; thus the regions wild
 Of eastern lands, of men who drink the streams 465
 Of Ganges, or who break the Araxes' ice,
 Saw thee reclining in thy golden car,
 Thy lions half concealed beneath thy robe;
 On his mean ass Silenus followed thee,
 His swollen temples with green vine leaves bound, 470
 And wanton priests thy hidden mysteries held.
 Thy company of Bassarids, thy band
 Of chosen followers led the Edonian dance
 Now on Pangæus, now on Thracian soil
 Of Pindus' heights; among the Cadmean dames 475

The Mænad, Theban Bacchus' comrade, came,
 Her body with a sacred fawn skin girt,
 The slender thyrsus in her waving hand.
 The bacchanals who mangled Pentheus' limbs,
 When madness left them and their limbs relaxed, 480
 Gazed on their deed as on an unknown crime.

Surrounded by her train of ocean nymphs,
 Cadmean Ino, shining Bacchus' aunt,
 Rules o'er the ocean; and the wandering youth,
 Divine Palæmon, Bacchus' kin, gives laws 485
 That still the raging of the mighty deep.
 Thee, when a child, Etrurian shepherds stole,
 But Nereus stilled the raging of the sea—
 Plane trees and laurel groves to Phœbus dear
 Sprang green with early leaves, a garrulous bird 490
 Sang in the branches, riotous ivy held
 The oars, and vines o'erhung the lofty mast;
 In the ship's prow the Idæan lion roared,
 A tiger from the Ganges held the poop.
 The frightened pirate leaped into the sea, 495
 And as he sank a new form covered him—
 A sinuous dolphin followed the swift ship.
 Pactolus that with rushing waters sweeps
 Its golden banks away, has carried thee
 On its rich current; the Massagetes, 500
 Who mix with blood their drink of milk, unbent
 Their conquered bows and freed their Getan shafts;
 Lycurgus' ax-armed people recognize
 The sway of Bacchus; the wild Dacian land,
 The wandering tribes that feel the north wind's blast,
 The nations where the cold Mæotis flows, 506
 And those on whom look down from heaven's heights
 The wagons twain and star of Arcady

Have felt his power. The scattered Geloni
 He overcame, and took away their arms 510
 From the fierce maiden warriors by his might.
 The virgin troops that by Thermodon dwell,
 To Mænads turned, cast from them their light shafts
 And sank to earth with drooping face. The mount
 Of blest Cithæron flowed with Theban blood; 515
 And Proetus' daughters wandered in the woods;
 In Juno's presence Argos honored him;
 Naxos, surrounded by the Ægean sea,
 Brought him a maid deserted for his bride,
 And with a better husband thus replaced 520
 Her loss. The Bacchic river freely flowed
 From the dry rock, its bubbling rills divide
 The turf, the deep earth drank the honey's stream,
 And fountains of white milk and Lesbian wine
 Mingled with odorous thyme. 525
 Bacchus led up his bride to heaven's height;
 With loose hair, Phœbus sang the bridal song,
 Twin Cupids waved aloft the bridal torch;
 At Bacchus' coming Jove laid by his dart
 Of fire, and loathed the dreaded thunderbolt. 530
 As long as old earth's starry heavens turn,
 As long as ocean with its waves surrounds
 Th' encircled earth, and while the full-orbed moon
 Continues to relight her dying fires,
 As long as Lucifer foretells the dawn, 535
 As long as high Arcturus touches not
 The azure ocean, we will pay our vows
 To fair Lyæus' bright divinity.

ACT III

SCENE I

Ædipus, Creon.

Ædipus. Thy face betrays the signs of tears, but
speak,

Whose life must be an offering to the god? 540

Creon. Thou bid'st me tell what fear would have me
hide.

Ædipus. If thou remain'st unmoved by suffering
Thebes,

Thy kindred's fallen scepter bids thee speak.

Creon. Thou'lt yearn to know not what thou fain
would'st know.

Ædipus. A want of knowledge is an idle balm 545
For ills. Would'st thou conceal the evidence
That brings us public health?

Creon. When medicine
Is bitter, painful is it to be healed.

Ædipus. Tell what thou heard'st or thou shalt learn
to know,

Conquered by heavy punishment, what power 550
The weapons of an angry king may have.

Creon. Kings hate the words their own commands
call forth.

Ædipus. Unless thy voice lay bare the oracle
Thou shalt be sent to dusky Erebus,
A sacrifice for all.

Creon. O grant the boon 555

Of silence. Can a lesser liberty
Be sought for from a king?

Ædipus. Such liberty

Oft harms both king and kingdom more than words.

Creon. What boon is left when silence is forbid?

Ædipus. He weakens royal power who, told to speak,
Keeps silence.

Creon. Hear unmoved, I pray, the words 561
Forced from me.

Ædipus. What man, being urged to speak,
Was ever punished for obedience?

Creon. Near the Dircean region of moist vales,
Afar from Thebes, there stands an ilex grove, 565

The cypress, ever green, lifts up its head

Above the wood, and aged, spreading oaks

Stretch out gnarled, rotten branches; wasting years

Have rent the cypresses, and from their roots

Great oaks have fall'n and lean 'gainst neighboring
trunks; 570

The bitter-berried laurel, the slim lime,

The Paphian myrtle, and the alder tree

Destined to move as oars through the wide deep,

The pine around whose slender bole the winds

Play and whose summit stretches to the sun, 575

Are here, and in their midst a mighty tree

Spreads o'er the lesser grove its heavy shade,

And darkens all beneath its spreading boughs.

In shadow, knowing neither light nor sun,

And stiff with everlasting frost, there lies 580

A melancholy pool; an oozy swamp

Surrounds the sluggish spring; here came the priest,

Nor knew delay—the place itself brought night.

The earth was hollowed out and brands were laid,
 Brands snatched from funeral pyres; the seer put on 585
 The sombre robe and smote upon his brow,
 Even to his feet his unkempt vestments flowed.
 With mourning guise the sad old man advanced,
 The gloomy yew upon his hoary locks.
 Black two-year sheep were brought and jet-black bulls;
 The flame destroyed the sacrifice, the sheep 595
 That still were living feared the deadly fire.
 Then he invoked the manes, thee invoked,
 King of the shades, and him who blocks the gates
 Of the Lethean waters; and his song 595
 Rolled magically forth, wild threats he sang,
 Compelled and calmed the airy shades, and poured
 Offerings of blood, and burned the victims whole—
 He saturated all the grot with blood.
 Libations too with the left hand he poured 600
 Of snow-white milk and wine, and sang again,
 And looking down he called with dreadful voice
 The manes. Hecate's train bayed back, the cave
 Thrice grimly thundered, all the earth was moved.
 'I have been heard,' the prophet said, 'my words 605
 Have proved effectual, the dark abyss
 Is broken open and a way is made
 For Pluto's people to the upper air.'
 The forest shook and lifted up its leaves,
 The oaks were split, a shudder shook the grove, 610
 Earth groaned and opened; either not unmoved
 Could hell behold her hidden depths assailed,
 Or earth, that she might give the dead a path,
 Rent wide her surface, thundering, or the dog,
 Three-headed Cerberus, in anger shook 615
 His heavy chains. Earth yawned and opened wide

Her mighty breast, I saw the darksome lake
Amid the shades, I saw the pallid gods
And very night. My frozen blood stood still.
The savage band leaped forth, that warlike race 620
Of brothers sprung from Dirce's dragon's teeth,
Leaped into life full-armed ; th' Erinyes shrieked,
Horror, blind Fury, and whatever else
Eternal night creates and keeps concealed,—
Grief tearing out its hair, and dread disease 625
Propping its weary head, and dull old age,
And shrinking fear, and evil pestilence,
All eager to destroy the Theban land.
My spirit fainted ; Manto, who knew well
The ancient ceremonies, stood aghast ; 630
Her fearless father, by his blindness bold,
Called up from cruel Dis the bloodless throng—
Straightway they hover like a fleecy cloud,
And breathe free air beneath the open sky.
More than the falling leaves of Eryx' height, 635
Or flowers that bloom at Hybla in the spring
When bees swarm round them, more than waves that
break
Against the shores of the Ionian sea,
More than the birds that flee the Thracian cold
And, cleaving heaven, change the northern snows 640
For Nile's warm air, are they the prophet's voice
Evoked. The trembling spirits eagerly
Fly to the coverts of the leafy groves.
First Zethus rises from the earth, he grasps
The horns of a fierce bull in his right hand, 645
Then comes Amphion, whose left hand supports
The harp that with sweet music drew the rocks ;
The haughty child of Tantalus held up

Proudly among her sons her drooping head
 And, safely glorying, beheld their shades ; 650
 Insane Agave, yet more wretched, came,
 The wild Bacchantes, who destroyed the king,
 Behind her, and, still uttering horrid threats,
 Poor, mangled Pentheus followed the mad train.
 Often invoked, Laius last advanced 655
 His shame-crowned head ; afar from all the train
 He stands and hides himself ; the priest renewed
 His Stygian prayers, until the shade revealed
 To open day the face he fain would hide.
 I tremble as I speak—with bloody limbs 660
 Dreadful to look upon he stood, his hair
 Unkenpt and covered o'er with shameful filth.
 With angry lips he spoke ; ' Cadmean house,
 Savage and ever glad in kindred blood,
 Shake the wild thyrsus, with inspired hand 665
 'Twere better thou should'st rend thy sons ; the love
 A mother bears her child is Thebes' worst crime.
 Alas, my country, not by angry gods,
 By sin art thou despoiled. No baleful wind
 Breathed from the south it is that injures thee, 670
 Nor does the earth, too little wet with showers,
 Slay with dry breath ; a blood-stained king destroys,
 Seizing upon a scepter, prize of crime,
 And on his mother's marriage bed. Base son !
 But yet more wretched than her son is she 675
 Who twice was bearer of unhallowed seed.
 He turned again to her who gave him birth,
 And has through her created odious sons,
 Has done what beasts scarce do, unto himself
 Begotten brothers,—evil intricate, 680
 And prodigy more doubtful than his Sphinx.

O, thou who in thy right hand dost sustain
 A bloody scepter, it is thee I seek,
 And all thy realm ; a father unavenged,
 I'll bring for bridesmaids to thy marriage-feast 685
 The dread Erinyes, I will bring the scourge,
 Thy home impure will ruin, crush thy house
 With impious war. Drive therefore from thy land
 In haste the exiled king, and let him bend
 Whitherso'er he will his fatal steps ; 690
 The earth will then grow green with flowery spring,
 Her herbs revive, the vital air will breathe
 Pure winds, and once again the forests know
 Their former beauty. Ruin, pestilence,
 Disaster, death, corruption, and distress, 695
 His worthy henchmen, will with him depart ;
 He shall desire with flying feet to leave
 Our kingdom, but with wearisome delays
 I'll stay his steps so he shall creep along
 Uncertain of the road, shall grope his way 700
 With the sad steps of age. Up, drive him forth
 From earth—from heaven I will shut him out.

Œdipus. An icy trembling fills my flesh and bones,
 Accused am I of doing what I feared ;
 Merope joined with Polybus disproves 705
 The crime of marriage ; Polybus unharmed
 Absolves my hand from guilt of parricide ;
 Father and mother prove me free from sin
 Of murder and adultery, what room
 Remains for crime ? Thebes mourned for Laius'
 death 710

Long ere my foot had touched Bœotia's land.
 Is the seer mocked, or is the god himself
 Faithless to troubled Thebes ? Ah, now I know

The shrewd accomplices in guile ; the seer
 Invents this lie, using the gods as cloak, 715
 And promises my scepter shall be thine. [*To Creon.*]

Creon. Could I then wish my sister thus dethroned ?
 If sacred ties of kinship held me not
 Within my station, yet would Fortune's self,
 Too often tempted, make me fear such deed. 720
 Now may'st thou lay aside the weight of power,
 Nor, laying it aside, be crushed. Oh, take
 In safety now a place of lower rank.

Ædipus. Thou counselest me freely lay aside
 This heavy scepter ?

Creon. Those who still might choose 725
 I would advise, but thou must bear thy lot.

Ædipus. For those who wish to rule, the surest way
 Is praise of moderate fortunes, ease, and sleep ;
 The restless often counterfeit such calm. 730

Creon. Is faith so long maintained so little worth ?

Ædipus. Pretended faith has oftentimes made safe
 The pathway to perfidious faithlessness.

Creon. Set free from all the burdens of the crown,
 I still enjoy the benefits of power ;
 The citizens come thronging to my door, 735
 And no day rises with alternate change
 On which our lares are not overflowed
 With gifts from royal kindred : splendid feasts,
 Rich clothing, safety by my favor won,
 And countless offerings. Could I deem I lacked 740
 Aught in such happy fortunes ?

Ædipus. Those thus blessed
 Lack ever moderation.

Creon. Shall I then
 Fall as if guilty, though my cause unheard ?

Ædipus. Has my life's fate been fully told to thee,
Or has Tiresias heard me plead my cause? 745
Yet seem I guilty. Ye have led the way,
I follow.

Creon. What if I am innocent?

Ædipus. Kings ever fear uncertainty no less
Than certain evils.

Creon. He whom empty fears
Alarm, deserves the true.

Ædipus. Who once has sinned, 750
When pardoned comes to be an enemy.
Let all that's doubtful fall.

Creon. Thus enmity
Is gendered.

Ædipus. He who fears such hate too much
Has never learned to rule; fear guards the realm.

Creon. The king who holds his throne with cruel
sway 755
Must fear the fearful; on its author's head
Will fear return.

Ædipus. [*To his followers.*] Shut up the criminal
Within a rocky cave, and guard him well.
I go to seek again my palace walls.

SCENE II

Chorus.

Thou art not author of our many woes, 760
'Tis not for thee Fate seeks Thebes' royal house;
'Tis the gods' ancient wrath pursues us still,
Castalia's grove to the Sidonian guest

Gave shelter, Tyrian colonists were bathed
By Dirce's fount, when great Agenor's son, 765
Weary of seeking over all the world
The sister Jove had ravished, stood afraid
Beneath our trees, adoring Jove himself:
At Phœbus' bidding he forsook his flight,
Followed the footsteps of the straying cow 770
That never yet had felt the ploughshare's weight
Nor bent beneath the great cart's curving yoke;
He from the fatal heifer gave a name
To the new people. Since that time the land
Has ever borne new monsters; the dread snake, 775
Born in deep valley, o'er the aged oaks
Hisses, and rears above the pines its head,
While on the ground its greater length is spread;
Or earth by birth unnatural brings forth
That armored host: from winding horn there went 780
The signal, from the trumpet's twisted brass
The strident note, but not before the band
Had tried their ready lips with warlike noise
Of unknown speech. The field by kindred hosts
Was held, fit offspring of the scattered seed; 785
They measured out their life in one short day—
After the day-star paled were born, and fell
Ere Hesperus had risen. Horror seized
The stranger at such marvels, and he feared
The new-born nations' war, until they died 790
And earth, their mother, saw the sons she bore
Returned within her lap. Let civil war
Rise thence, and let the Thebes of Hercules
From them learn bitter fratricidal wars.
Why tell the lot that Cadmus' grandson bore, 795
When with the antlers of the longlived stag

His brow was hidden, and the hounds pursued
Their master? Swift Actæon headlong fled
Through woods and mountains, and, 'mid fields and
rocks

Roaming with nimble feet, he feared to see 800
A feather moved by Zephyr, feared the toils
Himself had placed; and, mirrored in the waves
Of the untroubled fountain where had bathed
The virgin goddess bitterly ashamed,
He saw reflected bestial form and horns. 805

ACT IV

SCENE I

Œdipus, Jocasta.

Œdipus. My mind is full of cares which fear recalls.
The gods of heaven and hell deem Laius slain
By crime of mine, but still my guiltless soul,
Known better to myself than to the gods,
Denies the charge ; yet memory recalls 810
Faintly how with my lifted staff I felled
And gave to Dis that proud old man whose car
Hindered my path ; but far from Thebes he fell
Where in Phocæa's plain three pathways meet.
I pray thee solve the riddle, dear-loved wife : 815
Dying, how many years had Laius lived ?
Fell he in bloom of youth, or weak with age ?

Jocasta. 'Twixt youth and age, but somewhat
nearer age.

Œdipus. Were many in the train that followed him ?

Jocasta. Uncertain of the way, the greater part
Were lost, a faithful few alone remained 821
Beside his car.

Œdipus. Did any others fall,
Partakers of the royal fate ?

Jocasta. Alas !
One brave and faithful follower shared his lot. 824

Œdipus. Still I seem guilty. Number, place, agree.
But when—

Jocasta. Since then ten harvests have been reaped.

SCENE II

Ædipus, An Old Citizen of Corinth.

Corinthian. [To *Ædipus.*] King Polybus has found
eternal rest,

And Corinth calls thee to thy father's throne.

Ædipus. How fortune buffets me on every side!

Tell me, I pray thee, by what fate he fell. 830

Corinthian. A quiet sleep set free the old man's
soul.

Ædipus. Not murdered and yet dead my father lies.

Bear witness: fearless now of any crime,

As fits a son, I may lift up pure hands

To heaven.—But of the destiny foretold 835

That which I most have need to fear remains.

Corinthian. Thy father's throne will banish every
fear.

Ædipus. My father's throne I willingly would take,

But fear my mother.

Corinthian. Canst thou be afraid

Of her who anxiously for thy return 840

Is waiting?

Ædipus. Filial love has made me flee.

Corinthian. And wouldst thou leave her widowed?

Ædipus. Thou hast named

The thing I dread.

Corinthian. Reveal the hidden fear

That weighs upon thy mind, for I am wont

To guard the secrets of my lords.

Ædipus. Alas! 845

Warned by the Delphic oracle, I fear

A mother's marriage bed.

Corinthian. Thy empty fears
Put by, no longer tremble, Merope
Was not thy mother.

Ædipus. In a spurious son
What gain was hoped for?

Corinthian. Children make more firm 850
A kingdom's proud security.

Ædipus. What means
Hadst thou to learn the secrets of the bed?

Corinthian. A child, I gave thee to thy mother's
arms.

Ædipus. Thou gavest me to her; who gave me
thee?

Corinthian. A shepherd from Cithæron's snowy
top. 855

Ædipus. What fortune took thee to those wooded
heights?

Corinthian. I followed on the hills my horned flock.

Ædipus. Show some undoubted marks upon my
flesh.

Corinthian. Thou borest deep-cut scars of iron
bonds,

And from thy bruised and swollen feet arose 860
Thy name.

Ædipus. Again I ask, what man was he
Who gave my body to thee for a gift?

Corinthian. He fed the royal flocks and under him
Was placed a company of humbler men.

Ædipus. His name?

Corinthian. Our earliest recollections fail 865
With age, and, wearied, slip away with years.

Ædipus. Shouldst thou be able by his face and
form

To know again the man?

Corinthian. Perchance I might;

A trifle oft calls back a thing forgot.

Œdipus. Assemble all the herdsmen and their
flocks 870

Before the altars; slaves, go, hither call

Swiftly the men who shepherd all the flock.

Corinthian. Permit the thing so long a time
unknown

Still to lie hid, for often fraught with ill

Is truth for him who drags her to the light. 875

Œdipus. What greater ill than this is possible?

Corinthian. That must be great which is with great
toil sought.

Here meet the public safety and thy own,

The two are equal, take a middle path;

Seek nothing, let the fates unfold themselves. 880

Œdipus. He who disturbs auspicious fate does ill, /

But when affairs are at their last extreme

One acts with safety.

Corinthian. Seekest thou a race

Nobler than that of kings? Look lest thou loathe

When thou hast found thy parents.

Œdipus. I will know 885

My birth, although it prove of little worth.

But Phorbias, keeper of the royal flocks,

Comes; dost thou know the old man's name or face?

Corinthian. His form awakes a memory, but his face

Is yet not clearly known, though not unknown. 890

SCENE III

Ædipus, Corinthian, Phorbas.

Corinthian. Didst thou upon Cithæron's summits
herd

The fruitful flock when Laius ruled in Thebes?

Phorbas. Cithæron gave each summer to our flocks
Her fertile meadows and rich pasturage. 894

Corinthian. Dost thou not know me?

Phorbas. Dimly I recall—

Ædipus. Speak, didst thou ever give to him a child?
Thy cheeks change color, dost thou hesitate?

What answer seekest thou? Truth shuns delay.

Phorbas. Thou stirrest memories that time had
dimmed.

Ædipus. Speak out, lest pain compel thee to the
truth. 900

Phorbas. I gave this man the child—a useless gift,
The boy could not enjoy the light of heaven.

Corinthian. Far be the omen! Still he lives and
still

Long may he live!

Ædipus. Why sayest thou the child

No longer lives?

Phorbas. His tender limbs were bound 905
By iron bonds that pierced through both his feet,
The wound had caused a swelling, and the flesh
Was even then by foul corruption touched.

Ædipus. [*Aside.*] What wouldst thou further? Do
the fates draw near?

[*To Phorbas.*] Who was the child?

Phorbas. A promise seals my lips. 910

Œdipus. What, ho! bring fire; let flames draw forth the truth.

Phorbas. Through such inhuman ways shall truth be sought?

I pray thee, be content with ignorance.

Œdipus. If fierce I seem to thee, and uncontrolled, Thou hast a ready vengeance. Speak the truth, 915
Who was the child? What mother gave him birth?
His father, who?

Phorbas. His mother is thy wife.

Œdipus. Earth, open! Prince of darkness, king of shades,

Take back to shades Tartarean the fate
That overthrows the laws of lineage! 920
Cast stones at this base head, ye men of Thebes;
Slay me with darts; let sons and fathers come
With lifted sword; ye brothers, husbands, wives,
Take arms against me; and ye, plague-sick men,
Snatch from the pyres the brands to hurl at me. 925
A shame to men and hated of the gods
I wander, overthrowing holy laws,
Already worthy death when breathing first
The unfamiliar air. Give back at last
Thy baneful life; dare now to do some deed 930
Worthy thy crimes; haste with swift steps to seek
The royal palace, wish thy mother joy
Of home and children.

SCENE IV

Chorus.

If I could govern at my will my lot,
 Soft Zephyr only on my sails should blow, 935
 Nor should my trembling sailyards feel the gale ;
 A light and soft-breathed air should gently waft
 My fearless boat ; my path of life should lie
 Along the safe mid course. The foolish youth
 Who feared the Cretan king, to untried ways 940
 Trusted himself, sought like true bird to guide
 Through air his flight, but with unnatural wings :
 He gave the waters where he fell a name.
 Old Dædalus more shrewdly winged his way
 Through middle air, and, stooping 'neath the clouds,
 Waited his nursling (as the bird collects 946
 Its scattered young that fly the hawk in fear)
 Until the boy, in ocean struggling, moved
 Hands he had shackled for his daring flight.
 | Whoever dares just limits to exceed 950
 Hangs poised in place unsure. But what is this ?
 The door creaks, see, the palace servant comes ;
 He sadly shakes his head. [*To the servant.*] What
 word dost bring ?

ACT V

SCENE I

Chorus, Messenger.

Messenger. When overtaken by his fate foretold,
He recognized his loathsome origin, 955
And stood convicted of his crime, the king
Condemned himself and sought with hasty steps
The hated house. So rages through the land
The Lybian lion that with threatening front 959
Shakes back its tawny mane. His eyes were wild,
His face with anger stern; he sighed and groaned
And over all his limbs a cold sweat ran;
His foaming lips gave forth mad threatenings,
His anguish overflowed, and in its depths 964
O'erwhelmed him; raging, with himself he planned
Some evil monstrous as his monstrous fate.
'Why hinder punishment,' he cried, 'the sword
Should pierce this cursed breast; with scorching flame
Or stones let one subdue it; what fierce bird,
What tiger will upon my vitals feed? 970
Thou that hast been a harbor wide of crime,
Sacred Cithæron, from thy forests send
Wild beasts or rabid dogs to do me ill.
Give back Agave. Soul, why fear'st thou death?
'Tis death alone can snatch me from my fate 975
Guiltless.' He spoke and on his sword-hilt leaned
His impious hand, and drew the sword;—'To die,—

Canst thou with such brief punishment atone
 Crimes such as thine ; with one blow pay for all ?
 Die ! For thy father, surely 'tis enough.— 980
 But for thy mother, for the loathsome sons
 Thou causedst to see light, thy mourning land
 Which suffers for thy crime with widespread death ;
 What wilt thou give for these ? Thou canst not pay ;
 Thou art a bankrupt. Nature's very self, 985
 Who, Œdipus, for thee alone reversed
 Her changeless laws of birth, for thee must find
 New punishment. Oh, could I live again,
 And die again, and ever be reborn,
 And offered ever to new punishment ! 990
 Poor wretch, thy subtlest wit is needful here,
 The punishment that only once can fall
 Must be enduring ; slow death must be sought.
 Find out a place where mingled with the dead
 Yet far from those who live, thou mayest roam. 995
 Die, but not with thy father's death ! My soul,
 Delayest thou ? ' A sudden rain of tears
 O'erflowed his face, his cheeks were wet with grief.
 ' Is it enough to weep ? Enough that thus
 My eyes should flow with tears ? The eyes themselves
 Shall follow, from their sockets shall be torn ; 1001
 ' Ye gods of marriage, is not this enough ? '
 His threat'ning face with savage fire glowed red,
 His eyeballs hardly seemed to hold their place
 Within their sockets ; furious, desperate, 1005
 Enraged of mien and wild, he cried aloud,
 And turned his vengeful hand against himself ;
 His eyes expectant stood, and willingly
 Followed his fingers, rushed to meet the wound.
 With eagerness his crook'd hands sought his eyes, 1010

Digged out the eyeballs by their deepest roots,
 Then, lingering still within the vacant space,
 Tore with their nails the empty sockets' folds
 And hollow corners, raging overmuch
 And vainly. Then he raised his head to seek 1015
 The day, and scanning heaven with sightless eyes
 Found night; whatever from his mangled brow
 Still hung he rent away, and conquering cried
 To all the gods: 'Behold, I pray thee, spare
 My country, I have paid the debt was due, 1020
 Have borne the penalty was merited;
 A night that fits my marriage has been found.'
 Foul drops bedewed his face, his mangled head
 Poured from the broken veins a stream of blood.

Chorus. The sport of fate are we, yield then to fate. |
 Unquiet cares ne'er changed that distaff's thread, 1026
 Whatever we, the race of men, endure,
 Whatever we may do, comes from above; |
 Lachesis, with a hand that turns not back
 Her distaff, spinneth out the thread of life; 1030
 All walk a path prepared, and man's first day
 Foretells his last; not Jupiter himself
 May make the spindle of the fates turn back;
 The order of her turning, fixed for all,
 No prayers can change. Fear oftentimes has proved
 To many fatal, many meet their fate 1036
 When most they fear and shun it. Hark, the gates
 Open, the sightless king comes sadly forth
 Without a leader.

SCENE II

Œdipus, Chorus.

Œdipus. 'Tis well ; 'tis finished ; I have paid in
full 1040

All that was due my father. Welcome night !
What god appeased has scattered on my head
Black darkness ? Who forgives the criminal ?
I have escaped the day's all-seeing eye.
The murderer of thy father to thy hand 1045
Owes nothing. Light has fled thee ; such a face
Is meet for Œdipus.

Chorus. Behold ! Behold !
Jocasta rushes forth, with rapid steps,
Frantic and wild ; thus wild and frantic once
A Theban mother rent her son and learned, 1050
Too late, her crime. She fears and hesitates,
Yet longs to speak to the afflicted king.
Her shame gives place to sorrow, but her words
Come hesitating from her lips.

SCENE III

Œdipus, Jocasta, Chorus.

Jocasta. What shall I call thee ? Son ? Why
hesitate ? 1055
Thou art my son, why blush to hear the name ?
Speak to me, son, although unwillingly ;—
Why turn away thy head, thy sightless eyes ?
Œdipus. Who is it who forbids me to enjoy

My darkness, gives me back again my sight? 1060
 A mother's voice! Alas, my work is lost!
 It is no longer lawful we should meet;
 Vast seas shall separate the criminals,
 And unknown lands shall part them; and if one
 Stay here, the other under alien stars 1065
 And distant suns must dwell.

Jocasta. The fault was Fate's,)
 None sins in living out his destiny.

Œdipus. O mother, spare thy words, and spare my
 ears;

By what remains of this my mangled form,
 By all the fatal tokens of our race, 1070
 By all the good and evil of our name,
 I do beseech thee.

Jocasta. What, my soul, dost sleep?
 Why to the sharer of his crime refuse
 Due punishment? Incestuous one, through thee
 The beauty of the laws of human kind, 1075
 Confused, hath perished; die, and let the sword
 Cut short thy sinful life. If, shaking heaven,
 The father of the gods himself should hurl
 With savage hand his flashing thunderbolt,
 A mother infamous, I could not still 1080
 Endure sufficient penalty for crime.
 I long to die, let but a way be found;
 If thou hast slain thy father, lend thy hand
 No less to me thy mother. This last deed
 Remains; draw now thy sword, by that sword fell 1085
 My husband. Why not freely speak his name?
 He is my husband's father,—shall I thrust
 Within my breast the sword, or plunge it deep
 Into my ready throat? Ah, knowest thou not

To choose the place where thou shalt strike the blow?
 Seek out, my hand, the fruitful womb that bore 1091
 Husband and sons.

Chorus. She falls, struck down by death ;
 Her hand still lingers in the wound, the blood
 Drives out the sword.

Ædipus. Foreteller of the truth,
 And god of truth, I make my prayer to thee : 1095
 Only a father's murder was foretold,
 But twice a parricide, beyond my fear
 Guilty, I've slain my mother ; she lies dead
 Through this my guilt. O Phœbus, lying god,
 I have exceeded all the ills foretold. 1100
 With fearful steps tread now thy gloomy way ;
 Through nights obscure, with hesitating feet,
 Advance and with thy trembling hand feel out
 Thy pathway ; hasten on with trembling steps ;
 Fly hence !—Yet stay, lest o'er thy mother's corpse
 Thou fall. Ye weary ones, with fell disease 1106
 Burdened, behold I go ; draw breath again,
 Lift up your heads : a milder sky will shine
 When I am gone ; whoever still retains
 His life, though weak and prostrate, still shall draw
 Lightly the breath of life. Hence, end thy work ! 1111
 The earth's death-dealing poison I will take ;
 Harsh fates, the black and haggard plague, the chill
 Of dreadful sickness, and wild grief shall come
 With me,—with me ! Such guides for me are meet. 1115



AGAMEMNON

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

GHOST OF THYESTES.

AGAMEMNON.

ÆGISTHUS.

EURYBATES.

STROPHIUS.

ORESTES.

PYLADES.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

ELECTRA.

CASSANDRA.

NURSE OF CLYTEMNESTRA.

CHORUS OF TROJAN WOMEN

CHORUS OF ARGIVE WOMEN.

SCENE: *Before the palace of Agamemnon.*

AGAMEMNON

ACT I

SCENE I

The Ghost of Thyestes.

LEAVING the dark abode of gods of hell,
I come from depths profound of Tartarus,
Uncertain which abode I hate the more ;
Thyestes flees both heaven and hell. My soul
Is filled with dread, I tremble ; lo, I see 5
My father's home—nay, more, my brother's home!
This is the portal of the ancient house
Of Pelops ; here Pelasgia's kingly crown
Is consecrated ; here upon their throne
They sit who wield the scepter, this the place 10
Where meets the great assembly, this the place
Of feasting. I am glad I have returned !
Were it not better by the mournful streams
To dwell ? Were not the watch-dog of the Styx
That shakes his threefold necks and inky manes 15
Better ? Where, bound upon the flying wheel,
That form is borne ; where oft that useless toil
By the still backward rolling wheel is mocked ;
Where on the heart that ever grows anew
The eager birds feed ever ; where, consumed 20
With burning thirst, he stands amid the waves

Whose lips deceived still seek the flying stream,
 Grim penalty for other feasts—how small
 Compared with ours is that old man's crime!
 Let us consider all those guilty ones 25
 Who by the Gnosian judge have been condemned:
 Thyestes overtops them all in crime.
 By my own brother I was overcome,
 With my three sons was sated, they in me
 Have found a sepulcher; my flesh and blood 30
 I ate. And not this only; Fortune stained
 The father, but another, greater crime
 Was added to that sin—Fate bade me seek
 With my own daughter union infamous;
 Nor did I, fearful, shrink from her behest, 35
 I did the deed. So, that I might make use
 Of flesh of all my children, she, my child,
 Compelled by fate, bore fruit of me, her sire,
 Most worthy. So is nature backward turned;
 So have I by my crime confusion made, 40
 Have father's father with the father blent,
 The father with the husband, with the son
 The grandson, day with night! But now, though late,
 And coming after death to one long tried
 With evil fortunes, the dark prophecy's 45
 Uncertain promise is at length fulfilled.
 The king of kings, the one of leaders lord,
 Dread Agamemnon, following whose flag
 A thousand vessels broidered with their sails
 The Trojan seas, now, after ten long years, 50
 Troy being conquered, is at home again,
 About to give him to his wife's embrace.
 Now shall the house in blood of vengeance swim:
 I see sword, spear, and battle-ax; I see.

The royal head divided by the blow 55
 Of two-edged ax, already crimes are near,
 Already guile, blood, slaughter; yea, and feasts
 Are spread. Ægisthus, now the hour draws nigh
 For which thou wast begot. Why droops the head
 In shame? Why, doubtful, shrinks the trembling
 hand? 60

Why with thyself take counsel, turn away,
 And ask if this is right for thee to do?
 Behold thy mother; know that it is so.
 Why suddenly does summer's fleeting night
 Linger as does the winter's longer dark? 65
 Why holds it in the sky the failing stars?
 Do I delay the coming of the sun?
 Let daylight to the world return again. [Goes out.]

SCENE II

Chorus of Argive Women.

O Fortune, how deceitful are thy gifts!
 The lofty thou dost place in doubtful seats 70
 And hazardous, the sceptered never know
 A rest serene, nor can they for a day
 Be certain of their power, care on care
 Fatigues them, ever new storms vex their souls.
 The waters of the Libyan Syrtes rage 75
 Less wildly in the change of ebb and flood;
 Less wildly from its lowest depths heaved up,
 Surges the water of the Euxine sea,
 Northward, where never dipped in waters blue
 Boötes drives his starry wain, than turns 80
 The headlong fate of kings on Fortune's wheel.

All things that make them fear, they long to have
 Yet tremble to possess; refreshing night
 Brings not to them repose, and conquering sleep
 Frees not their breasts from care. What citadel 85
 Has not by mutual treachery been o'erthrown,
 Or vexed by impious war? Law, modesty,
 The sacred faithfulness of marriage vows,
 Forsake the court; with hand that thirsts for blood,
 Bellona, baleful goddess, follows it, 90
 And follows, too, that fury who inflames
 The proud, attendant on those o'er-proud homes
 That from their lofty height shall sometime fall.
 If arms were idle and deceit should cease,
 They yet would sink beneath their very weight, 95
 And fortune underneath its own load fail.
 The sails on which the favoring south wind blows
 Too fiercely fear the breeze; the lofty tower
 Whose summit pierces to the very clouds
 Is beaten by the tempests, and the grove 100
 That spreads abroad its heavy shadow sees
 Its old oaks shattered; lofty halls are struck
 By thunderbolts; great bodies are exposed
 The more to sickness, when the lean herds roam
 The arid pastures; 'tis the broadest back 105
 That feels the wound.
 Whatever Fortune to the heights has raised
 Is lifted up but for a deeper fall,
 But moderate possessions longer bide.
 Happy the man contented with his lot 110
 Among the common throng, who skirts the shore
 Before safe winds, and, daring not to trust
 His vessel to the open ocean, sails
 Near land.

ACT II

SCENE I

Clytemnestra, Nurse.

Clytemnestra. Why waver, slow of heart? Why
seek safe plans? 115

The better way is closed. Unstained I kept
My marriage vows, my widowed scepter held
In chaste fidelity ; now, virtue, law,
Fidelity and honor, piety,
And modesty which gone comes not again, 120
All these have perished. Give the rein to lust,
Let loose thy passions, crime must make crime safe.
Whatever faithless wife, with secret love
Made mad, whatever stepdame's hand, has dared ;
Whate'er that ardent and unnatural maid 125
Who fled from Colchis in Thessalian boat
Has dared : sword, poison.—With thy lover leave
Mycena and thy home in secret flight !
Why, timid one, of secrecy, and flight,
And exile, speak? Those things thy sister sought, 130
A greater crime is more befitting thee.

Nurse. O Argive queen, of Leda's race renowned,
Why broodest thou in silence? Of control
Impatient, why with swelling heart resolve
So fiercely? Thou art silent, but thy grief 135
Speaks in thy face ; therefore, whate'er it be,

Give thyself time and space ; delay oft heals
What reason cannot heal.

Clytemnestra. So great the pains
That torture me, I cannot brook delay.
The flames are burning up my heart and reins ; 140
Fear, mingled with my grief, applies the scourge ;
Hate drives me on, and base desire's yoke
Presses upon me, nor will be denied.
And midst the fires that thus besiege my soul,
Shame, wearied, sunken, conquered, once again 145
Rises. By varying tempests am I driven !
As when the winds and tides drive different ways
The depths of ocean, and the doubtful seas
Know not to whether evil they must bow,
So I have dropped the rudder from my hands, 150
And wheresoever rage, or hope, or grief
May bear me, thither do I go ; my boat
Is given to the waves. When one knows not
The way, 'tis best to follow chance.

Nurse. Who seeks
✓ In chance a leader, he is blindly rash. 155

Clytemnestra. He has no need to fear a doubtful
chance,
Whose fortunes are at lowest ebb.

Nurse. Thy crime
Will be unknown and safe, if so thou wilt.

Clytemnestra. The sins of royal houses shine abroad.

Nurse. Repentest thou the old crime, planning
yet 160

A new ?

Clytemnestra. The man is fool indeed who keeps
A limit in his sinning.

Nurse. He, who hides

His crime with crime, increases what he fears.

Clytemnestra. The sword and fire are oft best
medicine.

Nurse. But no one tries at first the uttermost. 165

Clytemnestra. In evil one must seize the quickest
way.

Nurse. Ah, let the sacred name of wife deter.

Clytemnestra. For ten years looked I on my
husband's face?

Nurse. The children that thou barest him call to
mind.

Clytemnestra. My daughter's marriage torches
I recall, 170

My son-in-law Achilles. Here, indeed,
Maternal faithfulness abides.

Nurse. She freed
From long delay the fleet becalmed, she stirred
The sluggish languor of the moveless sea.

Clytemnestra. O grief, O shame! A child of
Tyndarus, 175

Of heavenly race, I bore a child to be
A lustral offering for the Doric fleet!
I think upon my daughter's marriage-bed,
Which, worthy Pelop's house, was then prepared
When he, her father, at the altar stood. 180

The sacrificing priest! What nuptial fires!
The prophet Calchas at his own response
Recoiled, the altars shrank away. O house,
Still overcoming crime with crime, with blood
We purchase favoring winds, buy war with death. 185
But were a thousand ships by her death freed,
The ships were not set free by favoring god,
'Twas Aulis drove the impious vessels forth.

With auspices like these he wages not
 A warfare fortunate. A slave's slave made 190
 By love, unmoved by prayers, that old man held
 The booty from Apollo Smintheus torn,
 Already burning for the sacred maid.
 Dauntless Achilles could not with his threats
 Bend him, nor he who saw (none else) earth's fate— 195
 The prophet to us faithful, to the slave
 Most mild, nor troubled people, nor the pyres
 Relighted. Conquered, though by no foe's hand,
 Midst the last ruins of the falling Greeks
 He slept, had time for lust, renewed his loves. 200
 Nor ever was his lonely couch unpressed
 By barbarous mistress; he it was who took
 The virgin of Lernessus, rightful spoil
 Of great Achilles, not ashamed to seize
 The maiden from the hero's bosom torn. 205
 Lo, this is Priam's enemy! And now
 He feels again the wounds of love, inflamed
 With passion for the Phrygian prophetess;
 The winner of the Trojan trophies turns
 Again toward Ilium, husband of a slave, 210
 And son-in-law of Priam! Up, my soul!
 No easy war is that thou now wouldst wage!
 Crime must be used. O weak and slow of heart,
 What day dost thou await? Till Phrygian maid
 Shall hold the scepter in great Pelop's house? 215
 Do orphaned virgins keep thee still at home?
 Or does Orestes keep thee, he so like
 His father? All the ill about to come
 Upon them, all the storms that overhang,
 Shall move thee. Wretched one, why longer pause? 220
 The raging stepdame of thy sons is here.

If thou canst do no otherwise, the sword
 Shall pierce thy side, shall slay both thee and him.
 Now mingle blood with blood ; in dying, kill
 Thy husband ; 'tis not misery to die, 225
 When thou art with thy enemy destroyed.

Nurse. Queen, curb thy spirit, cease from wrath,
 recall

How great the day : he comes, the conqueror
 Of savage Asia, Europe's punisher,
 Who drags in triumph captured Pergamus 230
 And Phrygians all too long victorious.
 Wouldst thou with secret crime attack him now,
 Whom Hercules, although his eager hand
 Was grimly armed, touched not with cruel sword,
 Nor Ajax, though he deemed that death was sure, 235
 Nor Hector, to the Greeks the sole delay
 In war, nor Paris' weapon surely aimed,
 Nor Memnon black, nor Xanthus bearing down
 Bodies and armor mingled in its waves,
 Nor Simois' stream that flowed encarnadined 240
 With slaughter, nor the ocean god's white son,
 Cygnus, nor Thracian phalanx led to war
 By Rhesus, nor the bucklered Amazon
 With ax and quiver ? Dost thou think to slay
 This one, returned ? To stain with murder base 245
 The altars ? Will victorious Greece endure
 This crime and not avenge ? See now the steeds,
 And weapons, and the sea thick strewn with ships,
 The soil with blood of noble Greeks made wet,
 And all the fate of Troy, turned back on us ! 250
 Restrain thy fiery passion, calm thy soul.

SCENE II

Ægisthus, Clytemnestra, Nurse.

Ægisthus. The time that ever with my heart and
soul

I feared, is here indeed—for me the end.
Why turn away? Why, at the first attack,
Lay down thy arms? Thou mayest certain be 255
That vengeful gods prepare a fearful fate
And dread disaster for thee. Thy vile head
Make bare, Ægisthus, for all martyrdoms ;
Receive with ready breast the sword and flame ;
One finds in death so met no punishment. 260
My comrade oft in danger, Leda's child,
Be thou my ally now ; that leader base,
That father harsh, shall give thee blood for blood.
But wherefore dost thou tremble? Wherefore flies
A pallor to thy cheeks? With drooping lids 265
Why stand amazed?

Clytemnestra. The love I owe as wife
Conquers and turns me back. To fealty
From which it was not ever right to turn
I'm brought again, again I seek chaste truth ;
For never is the hour too late to seek 270
The path of virtue, who repents his sin
Is almost innocent.

Ægisthus. Thou art insane ;
Dost thou believe or hope there yet remains
For thee, with Agamemnon, marriage truth ?
Though nought within thy soul should make thee
fear, 275
Yet, arrogant and by too strong a breath
Of favoring fortune borne, his pride would swell

Beyond control ; while Troy yet stood, his men
 Ill brooked his pride, why trust a nature fierce
 Now Troy is his? He was Mycena's king ; 280
 He comes as tyrant, for prosperity
 Increases pride. Surrounded by a throng
 Of concubines, he comes ; but midst the throng
 The servant of the truth-foretelling god
 Is eminent and holds Mycena's king. 285
 If thou wouldst with another woman share
 Thy husband's bed, yet she, perchance, would not.
 The greatest ill a wife can know is this :
 A concubine possessing openly
 Her husband's home. Nor mistresses, nor kings 290
 Can share their power.

Clytemnestra. Why wouldst thou drive me back,
 Ægisthus, to the steep, why fan the rage
 That lives already in the flame? Perchance
 The victor has allowed himself to use
 Some licence t'ward the captive maid—'tis meet 295
 Neither for mistress of the house nor wife
 To think on that. The throne has other laws
 Than has the humbler couch. Of shameful crime
 Conscious, my soul may not too harshly judge
 My husband's sins. He readily forgives, 300
 Who needs forgiveness.

Ægisthus. Is it so indeed?
 Is mutual indulgence then allowed?
 Are then the laws of kings unknown to thee,
 Or new? To us harsh judges, to themselves
 Most mild, they deem their greatest pledge of power
 To be the right to do what is forbid 306
 To others.

Clytemnestra. Helen's sin has been forgiven,

With Menelaus she returns again
Through whom on Europe and on Asia came
Like dangers.

Ægisthus. But no woman ever filled 310

With secret passion Menelaus' heart,
Nor made him faithless to his wife. This man
Seeks crime in thee, desires to find excuse;
And if, indeed, thou hadst done nothing base,
What profits innocence and blameless life? 315

When thy lord hates thee he inquires not—
Thou must be guilty. Exiled, fugitive,
Wouldst seek Eurotas, Sparta, and thy home?
Whom kings divorce are not allowed to flee,
With empty hopes thou wouldst allay thy fears. 320

Clytemnestra. None but the true have knowledge
of my sin.

Ægisthus. None true e'er cross the threshold of a
king.

Clytemnestra. With wealth I'll buy fidelity.

Ægisthus. The faith
That can with gold be bought, more gold can shake.

Clytemnestra. My former shame arises in my breast,
Why harass with thy words? With kindly voice 325
Why urge thy evil counsels? Dost thou think
The noble queen who braves the king of kings
Will marry thee, an exile?

Ægisthus. Why should I
Less noble seem to thee than Atreus' son, 330
I who was born Thyestes' son?

Clytemnestra. Say too
His grandson, if the son is not enough.

Ægisthus. I was begotten by Apollo's will;
I need not blush, since such my ancestry.

Clytemnestra. Dost call Apollo source of that base
stock? 335

Thou drov'st him from the sky, night fell again,
And he recalled his steeds. Why make the gods
The sharers of dishonor? Taught by fraud
To steal the pleasures of another's bed,
Whom through illicit love alone we proved 340
A man, begone, and take from out my sight
My home's dishonor; leave the palace pure
For king and husband.

Ægisthus. I am used to ills,
And exile is not new; if thou, O queen,
Commandest, not alone from home I go 345
And Argos—I delay not at thy word
To pierce with steel this heart weighed down with
grief.

Clytemnestra. A bloody child of Tyndarus, indeed,
Would I become should I allow this deed;
She owes thee fealty who sinned with thee. 350
Come with me, that together we may find
A means to free us from the threatening storm.

SCENE III

Chorus of Argives.

Sing songs in praise of Phœbus, noble youths!
For thee the festal throng enwreath their hair,
For thee the unwed Argives wave the boughs 355
Of laurel and their tresses virginal
Unbind. O ye who drink the icy wave
Of Erasinus' or Eurotas' stream,
Or of Ismenus flowing silently

Between green banks ; thou too, O Theban guest, 360
 Join in our chorus ; so Tiresias' child,
 Foreknowing Manto, bade with sacred feasts
 To venerate the gods, Latona's twins.

Victorious Phœbus, peace once more restored,
 Unbend thy bow, and from thy shoulder loose 365

Thy quiver heavy with swift shafts, and smite
 With fingers swift the tuneful lute, I would
 That it may sound no stern or lofty strain,
 But as thou usest to the gentle lyre

To modulate a simple melody, 370
 When to the strain the skilful muse gave ear.

Sound too the graver chords as thou hast sung
 When gods beheld the Titans overcome
 By thunder ; or when mountains superposed
 On mountains built a pathway to the skies 375

For monsters fierce—Ossa on Pelion stood,
 Pineclad Olympus weighed upon them both.
 O sharer of the greater sovereignty—

Both wife and sister, Juno, queen, be near !
 Thy chosen band who in Mycena dwell, 380

We honor thee. Thou only dost protect
 Thy troubled Argos that now prays to thee.
 Thou holdest peace and war within thy hand,
 Take, Victress, Agamemnon's laurels now.

To thee the boxwood flute with many stops 385
 Sounds now the sacred notes of praise ; to thee

The maidens touch the tuneful strings in song
 Of sweet accord ; the Grecian matrons wave
 To thee the votive torch ; before thy shrine

Is slain the snow-white consort of the bull, 390
 Untaught to plow, whose neck has never felt

— The yoke. And thou, O child of mighty Jove,

Illustrious Pallas, thou who oft hast sought
 The Trojan turrets with thy hostile spear,
 Thee, in the woman's chorus, old and young 395
 Adore ; thy priestess, at thy coming, opens
 The temple doors, the great procession comes.
 Wearied and bent with years, the aged bring
 To thee their thanks for wishes gratified,
 And pour with trembling hand the wine to thee. 400
 Thee too, as we are wont, we supplicate,
 Diana of the crossways ; thou didst first,
 Lucina, bid thy native Delos stand,
 That here and there among the Cyclades
 Was driven by the winds, nor rooted fast— 405
 Her land is fixed, she yields not to the winds
 That once she followed, offers vessels now
 Firm haven. Number now, victorious one,
 The deaths that Niobe bewailed, she stands
 A mournful rock on Sipylus' high top, 410
 And from the ancient marble ever flow
 New tears ; both men and maids pay reverence due,
 Twin goddess, to thy bright divinity.
 O guide and father, with thy thunderbolt
 Excelling, at whose nod the heavens bow, 415
 O Jove, great author of our race, accept,
 Thou more than all, the gifts we offer thee ;
 Look kindly on thy not degenerate sons.
 But see, a soldier comes with hasty steps,
 And bears the evidence of joy, for lo, 420
 His spear is wreathed with laurel ; he is here,
 The ever-faithful servant of the king.

ACT III

SCENE I

Eurybates, Clytemnestra.

Eurybates. O shrines and altars of the heavenly
ones,

O lares of my fatherland, sore worn
And scarcely crediting myself, I stand 425
A suppliant, after many weary years,
And worship thee! Pay now thy vows to God,
The glory of Argolis comes at length,
The victor Agamemnon, to his own.

Clytemnestra. Glad words I hear. Through ten
long years desired, 430
Where tarries he? Upon the land or sea?

Eurybates. Unharmed, with glory rich, with honor
great,
He sets his foot upon the longed-for shore.

Clytemnestra. Let us with sacred offerings celebrate
This late-come, prosperous day, and reverence 435
Gods slow if favoring. Tell me, lives he yet—
My husband's brother? Say where now abides
My sister?

Eurybates. Better fate is theirs than ours,
I hope and pray, yet cannot surely tell,
Since most uncertain are the changing seas. 440
The scattered fleet was smitten by the waves,

Nor ship saw ship, and Atreus' son himself
 Bore greater ills at sea than in the war.
 The victor comes as vanquished, bringing back
 Few ships of all his fleet and these half wrecked. 445

Clytemnestra. What chance befell our ships? Upon
 the deep

How were our leaders parted?

Eurybates. Bitter news

Thou askest. Thou wouldst have me mix with joy
 Most grievous tidings, and my spirit fears
 To tell the sorrows, trembles at the woe. 450

Clytemnestra. Yet tell me all. Who shuns to know
 his loss

Increases fear; the ills that torture most
 Are those half known.

Eurybates. When Pergamus had fall'n

Before the Doric brands, and all the spoil
 Had been divided, each one sought the sea 455
 In haste; the soldier, wearied with the sword,
 Unbound it from his side, through all the poop
 The bucklers lay neglected; to the oar
 The warriors put their hands, and each delay
 Seemed long to those who hasted to be gone. 460

Again the standard on the royal ship
 Shone out, again the trumpet's silver note
 Recalled the joyful rowers, and again
 The golden prow marked out the way, made plain
 The pathway which a thousand ships should take. 465
 At first a gentle air impels the ship,
 Touching the sails, the tranquil waves scarce stir
 Beneath light Zephyr's sighing breath. The sea
 Is splendid with the fleet that covers it.

With joy we look on Troy's deserted shores, 470

With joy we leave behind Sigeum's waste.
 The youths make haste to ply the ready oar
 And aid the winds; they move their sinewy arms
 With strokes alternate, and the furrowed waves
 Flash up and strike against the vessel's sides, 475
 The white foam covers up the ocean's blue.
 But when a stronger breeze fills up the sails,
 They lay aside the oars and to the winds
 They trust the ships. The soldiers stretch themselves
 Upon the rowing benches, or from far 480
 They watch how fast the vessel leaves behind
 The flying land, or tell the deeds of war :
 Brave Hector's threats, the chariot, and the corpse
 Brought back by Priam for the funeral pyre,
 And Jupiter Herceus' altars, red 485
 With blood of kings. Then dolphins on the foam
 Sported and leaped across the swelling waves
 With curving backs, and played about the sea,
 And moved in circles, and beside the keel
 Swam, joving now to follow, now to lead 490
 The fleet, now capered round the first ship's beak
 The choric band, now round the thousandth frisked.
 Already all the coast had disappeared,
 The shore was hidden and Mount Ida's top
 Was dim with distance, and the smoke of Troy 495
 Appeared an inky cloud which keenest sight
 Alone could see. Already from the yoke
 Was Titan setting free his weary steeds,
 Already day was done, and mid the stars
 The daylight was departing; a light cloud, 500
 Increasing ever from an inky spot,
 Made dim the bright rays of the setting sun ;
 The many colored sunset made us fear

A storm. At first, night showed a starry sky,
The sails, deserted by the wind, dropped loose. 505
Then from the summits of the hills there fell
A murmur deep that threatened graver things,
And the long shore and rocky headlands groaned,
The waves rolled up before the coming wind ;
Then suddenly the moon is hid, the stars 510
Vanish, and to the skies the deep is tossed,
The heavens disappear. 'Tis doubly night,
A thick mist hides the darkness, all light flees,
And sea and sky are mingled. From all sides
The winds together blow upon the sea 515
And hurl the waters from their lowest depths—
The east and west winds strive, the north and south,
Each sends his darts, and all in hostile wise
Stir up the straits, a whirlwind sweeps the sea.
The Thracian northwind whirls the snow about, 520
The Libyan southwind drives along the sands,
Nor holds the south wind ; Notus blows along
Dense rain clouds, adds its waters to the waves,
And Eurus shakes the orient, stirs the realm
Of Nabathæa and the eastern straits. 525
How from the sea wild Corus lifts his head !
You would believe the world to be hurled down
From every quarter and the gods themselves
To be from out their inner heavens torn,
And in the night of Chaos all things lost. 530
The stormy sea attacks the stormy sky,
The winds hurl back the waves, the ocean's bed
Is all too small, the rain clouds and the waves
Mingle their floods. In such calamity
This comfort even fails : to see, at least, 535
And know, the evil by whose means we die ;

For darkness weighs upon us, and the night
 Of Hades, and ill-omened Styx is there.
 Yet fires shine forth and from the rent clouds gleams
 The baneful lightning ; to our burdened hearts 540
 This fearful light is sweet, its glare desired.
 The fleet destroys itself, prow batters prow,
 And side 'gainst side is driven. Opening wide,
 The yawning ocean swallows up a ship,
 Then spews it forth again upon the deep ; 545
 Here sinks a vessel with its freight, and here
 One to the waters yields its shattered hulk ;
 A great wave covers one, one floats despoiled
 Of all its rigging, neither sails nor oars
 Nor upright masts that bear the lofty yards 550
 Remain, it tosses on th' Icarian sea
 A broken wreck. Experience brings no aid,
 Nor reason ; skill avails not in such ills.
 Cold terror seizes all, the sailors leave
 Their post of duty, stupefied with fear ; 555
 The hand lets fall the oar ; the dread of death
 Compels the wretched ones to pay their vows
 To heaven, and Greeks and Trojans make one prayer.
 What may not fate accomplish ! Pyrrhus now
 Envy his father ; great Ulysses feels 560
 Envy of Ajax ; Atreus' younger son
 Of Hector ; Agamemnon fain would share
 The lot of Priam. Whoso fell at Troy
 Is now called happy, who at honor's post
 Deserved to die, who lives to fame and lies 565
 Beneath the conquered soil. ' Shall sea and waves
 O'erwhelm us where no noble deed is dared,
 And shall a coward's fate consume the brave ?
 Must death be useless ? Whatsoever god

Thou art who art not yet, with all our ills, 570
 Appeased, calm now at length thy face divine ;
 Troy even would have tears for our distress.
 If still thy wrath endures and thou wouldst send
 The Doric race to ruin, why must these
 On whose account we perish, with us die? 575
 Oh, calm the hostile sea ! This fleet contains
 Both Greeks and Trojans.' So they cried, nor more
 Were able, for the waters drowned their words.
 Behold another woe : Athena comes
 Armed with the thunderbolt of angry Jove, 580
 And threats with all the power her spear may claim,
 Her ægis and the Gorgon's wrath, or fire
 Of Jove, her father ; tempests blow anew.
 Ajax alone is still invincible,
 And wrestles with the storm ; while yet he strives 585
 With straining rope to guide his vessel's sails,
 The lightning strikes him ; then another bolt
 Is levelled : Pallas, imitating Jove,
 With hand drawn back lets drive with all her force
 This well-aimed bolt, it passes through the ship 590
 And Ajax, and bears down both it and him ;
 He, nothing moved, firm as the rugged cliff,
 Rises half burned from out the briny deep,
 Divides the boisterous sea, and breasts the waves,
 And seizing with his hand the vessel's side, 595
 He seems to draw the flame, and Ajax stands
 Shining above the dark expanse of sea
 Which mirrors back his glory. When at length
 A rock is reached, he madly cries aloud :
 ' Glad am I to have conquered sea and flame, 600
 Glad am I to have vanquished sky and sea,
 The thunderbolt and Pallas ; I fled not

In fear before the war god, nor drew back
 Before the darts of Phœbus. I o'ercame
 These with the Phrygians, shall I now know fear? 605
 Thou sent'st another's weapon with weak hand.
 But what if he himself should send a dart?'
 Further he in his madness would have dared,
 When Father Neptune, lifting up his head
 Above the waters, with his trident smote 610
 The cliff and overturned it, broke away
 The crag, and he who in its fall was crushed
 Lies overwhelmed by earth and sea and fire.
 Another greater trouble waits for us,
 Poor shipwrecked ones. There is a shallow sea, 615
 With rough shoals treach'rous, where false Caphareus
 Covers her hidden rocks with whirlpools swift;
 The waters boil against the cliffs, the waves
 Seethe ever with alternate change. Above,
 A fortress frowns, it overlooks both seas; 620
 Thy Pelops' shores on one side and, curved back,
 The isthmus which divides th' Ionian seas
 From Phryxus' waves; upon the other lies
 Lemnos, by crime made great, Chalcedon too,
 And Aulis which so long delayed the fleet. 625
 This fortress Palamedes' father holds,
 Upon its highest pinnacle he sets,
 With impious hand, a blazing torch, whose light
 Draws to the treacherous cliffs the Grecian fleet.
 The ships are caught upon the pointed rocks, 630
 Part go to pieces in the shoals, a part
 Cling to the rocks, their prows are torn away;
 One vessel strikes another as it turns,
 And by the wrecked ship is the other wrecked.
 They lear the land, prepare for open sea. 635

Toward dawn the storm's rage fell away ; for Troy
 Due satisfaction had been rendered back ;
 Phoëbus returned and daylight showed the wreck
 Of that sad night.

Clytemnestra. Shall I be sad or glad
 For husband given back? In his return 640
 I take delight, but I am forced to weep
 The heavy losses of our realm. Give back,
 O father, shaking with thy thunderbolts
 The realms sublime, give back the favoring gods
 To Greece. [*To the Chorus.*] Now bind the brows
 with festal wreaths, 645
 And let the sacred flute pour forth sweet tones,
 Before great altars let white victims fall.
 But see the Trojans come, a mournful band,
 With hair unkempt, while high above them all
 Apollo's untamed prophetess waves high 650
 The laurel of the god.

SCENE II

Chorus of Trojan Captives, led by Cassandra.

Alas, how sweet a woe to man is given
 In love of life, when open lies the way
 To flee from all misfortunes, when free death,
 That haven tranquil with eternal calm, 655
 Invites the wretched—there no terrors fright,
 No storms of fortune rage, nor thunderbolts
 Of mighty Jove ; its deep peace fears no league
 Of restless citizens, nor angry threats
 Of foes victorious, nor the stormy seas 660
 When Corus blows, nor hostile battle line,

Nor dust cloud raised before the coming ranks
 Of savage horsemen, nor a city's fall
 Or nation's, when the hostile flames lay waste
 The walls, nor savage war. 665
 Disdainful of the fickle god, he breaks
 All bondage, who can unafraid behold
 Black Acheron and gloomy Styx, and dares
 To put an end to life—that man to kings
 Is equal, yea is equal to the gods. 670
 How wretched he who knows not how to die!
 We saw our country's fall on that dread night,
 When ye, O Doric flames, laid hold on Troy.
 Not overcome by war nor arms she fell;
 As once before, Herculean arrows smote. 675
 Not Thetis' son and Peleus', not the friend
 Too well beloved by Peleus' warlike son,
 Conquered, when feigned Achilles glorious shone
 In borrowed armor; not Achilles' self
 When in his fiery heart he suffered grief, 680
 And on the ramparts Trojan women feared
 His swift attack. In evil case she lost
 Misfortune's utmost honor: to go down,
 By brave deeds vanquished. Twice five years she stood,
 To perish by the treach'ry of a night. 685
 We saw the seeming gift, the mighty mole
 The Grecians left, and, credulous, we brought
 Within the city walls, with our right hands,
 The fatal offering. At the gateway oft
 The great horse trembled, bearing in its womb 690
 Leaders and war concealed. It might have been
 That we had turned their guile against themselves,
 So that the Greeks had died by their own fraud.
 Oft rang the shaken shields, and on our ears

A gentle murmur smote as Pyrrhus groaned,
 Slow to submit him to Ulysses' will. 695
 Secure from fear the Trojan youths rejoice
 To touch the sacred ropes. Astyanax
 Leads here a company, his peers in age ;
 The maiden to Thessalian funeral pyre 700
 Betrothed advances with another band—
 These maids, those youths ; glad mothers bring the
 gods
 Their votive offerings ; to the altars go
 Glad fathers ; through the city, on each face
 One look is seen, and—what has never been 705
 Since Hector's funeral pyre—sad Hecuba
 Rejoices. O unhappy grief, what first,
 What last, dost thou make ready to bewail ?
 The city walls which hands of gods built up,
 But thy hand overthrew ? The temples burned 710
 Above their gods ? There is no time to weep
 Those ills ! The Trojan women weep thy fate,
 Great Father ! In the old man's throat I saw,
 I saw the sword of Pyrrhus, the slow blood
 Scarce tinged the steel. 715

ACT IV

SCENE I

Cassandra, Chorus of Trojan Women.

Cassandra. O Trojan women, check thy tears that
flow,
Demanded ever by the passing hours ;
Or weep your own misfortunes, mine reject
Companion, cease laments for my distress ;
I may myself suffice for all our ills. 720

Chorus. Whom secret griefs disturb, they sorrow
most ;
We joy to mingle tears with tears, to weep
Together for our own, nor canst thou weep
Such ruin worthily, though thou art brave,
Heroic, and hast suffered many woes. 725
Not the sad song which from the vernal boughs
The mournful nightingale in varying strains
To Itys sings, not that in which laments
The Thracian swallow, who in querulous tones
Tells from the roofs her husband's impious loves, 730
Could worthily bewail thy fallen house ;
Should shining Cygnus, 'mongst the snow-white swans
Abiding on the Ister and the Don,
His death-song sound ; or halcyons join lament
For the lost Ceyx with the murmuring waves, 735
When to the tranquil deep they trust again

And anxiously above their wavering nests
 Cherish their young ; or, should the mournful throng
 Of Cybele which, by the shrill flute stirred, 739
 Smite on their breasts and Phrygian Atys mourn—
 Should these lament and lacerate their arms
 'Twere not enough. Our tears no limit have.
 Cassandra, since our suffering knows no bounds.
 Why from thy forehead tear the sacred bands?
 I think the wretched most should fear the gods. 745

Cassandra. Misfortunes now have conquered every
 fear,

Nor lift I any prayer to those in heaven ;
 Should they desire, they have no way to harm.
 Fortune has robbed herself of all her power.
 No father, land, or sister now is mine, 750
 The graves and altars drank my people's blood.
 Where is that joyous band of brothers now ?
 The palace of the sad old king is left
 Empty ; among so many marriage-beds
 All save the Spartan woman's now are seen 755
 Widowed ; the mother of so many kings,
 The fruitful Thracian queen, who furnished forth
 So many fires of death, sad Hecuba,
 Using new laws, assumes an aspect wild ;
 Madly she howls around her ruined home, 760
 Outliving Hector, Priam, Troy, herself.

Chorus. Apollo's priestess suddenly is still,
 Her cheeks are pale, a trembling strikes her limbs,
 Her fillet bristles, her soft locks rise up
 In horror, with a stifled murmur sounds 765
 Her throbbing heart, uncertain is her glance,
 Her eyes turn to and fro or gaze unmoved ;
 Higher than is her wont she holds her head

Toward heaven, and moves along with haughty step ;
 Now the wild Mænad, raging with the god, 770
 Unlocks her struggling lips or strives in vain
 To close them on the message of the god.

Cassandra. Why dost thou to Parnassus' sacred
 height

Impel me, goaded by the stinging lash
 Of inspiration new, beside myself? 775

Depart, O Phœbus, I am thine no more.
 Quench the prophetic fire in my breast.
 For whom now shall I rove in holy rage ?
 For whom now celebrate the bacchanal ?
 Now Troy is fallen, why should I remain 780

A seer whose prophecies are not believed ?
 Where am I? Sweet light flies and night obscures
 My sight, the sky lies hidden in the dark.
 But see, day brightens with a twofold sun,
 And Argos rises double. Ida's woods 785

I see ; the shepherd, fatal arbiter,
 Between the potent goddesses as judge
 Is seated. Fear, ye kings, I warn ye fear
 The bastard child ; that nursling of the woods
 Shall be the one to overthrow your home. 790

Why bears that mad one in her woman's hand
 The hostile spear? With Amazonian sword
 Whom seeks the Spartan woman's murderous hand ?
 What other face is that which draws my eyes ?
 The lion of Marmorica lies low, 795

The conqueror of wild beasts, his lofty neck
 Brought down by tooth of an inglorious foe ;
 The daring lioness' bloodthirsty bite
 He has endured. O shades of those I loved,
 Why call ye me, the only one unharmed 800

Of all my race? O father, thee I seek,
 I who have seen the burial of Troy.
 O brother, terror of the Greeks, Troy's aid,
 I see no more thy former grace, see not
 Those hands made hot by burning of the fleet, 805
 But lacerated limbs and grievous wounds,
 Torn by the heavy chain: I follow thee,
 O Troilus! Too soon thou didst engage
 In battle with Achilles! Thou didst bear,
 Deiphobus, a face of fear, 'twas given 810
 By thy new bride. My soul is glad to pass
 The Stygian fens, to see the savage dog
 Of Tartarus, the realm of eager Dis!
 To-day the boat of gloomy Phlegethon
 Carries across the river royal souls, 815
 The victor and the vanquished. O ye shades,
 To you I pray; thou flood by which the gods
 Make oath, to thee I pray no less; draw back
 The covering of the dusky world awhile,
 That toward Mycenæ Phrygia's spirit horde 820
 May turn their eyes. Behold, unhappy ones,
 The fates are put to flight.
 The squalid sisters threat, they wildly lash
 Their bloody whips, the left hand swings the brand,
 Around their shrunken limbs the sable robe 825
 Of mourning clings, and terrors of the night
 Are heard, and giant bones through time corrupt
 Lie in the slimy fen. The worn old man,
 Who mourns the murders that shall be, forgets
 His thirst, nor strives to drink the wanton stream; 830
 And father Dardanus in solemn dance
 Exults.

Chorus. Already is her passion spent,

She falls on bended knee, as falls the bull
 Before the altars, bearing in its neck
 A heavy wound. Her drooping form lift up. 835
 But lo, where Agamemnon comes at length,
 With victor laurels crowned, to venerate
 His gods; his wife went forth with joyous steps
 To meet him, and as one with him returns.

SCENE II

*Agamemnon, Clytemnestra, Cassandra, Chorus of
 Argive Women.*

Agamemnon. At length, unharmed, I find my
 native land. 840
 Hail, soil beloved! To thee has spoil been given
 By countless foreign nations, unto thee
 Submits at last great Asia's Troy, so long
 Successful. [*Sees Cassandra.*] Why stretched out
 upon the earth
 With drooping head lies here Apollo's maid? 845
 Slaves, lift her up; with water cool restore
 Her strength. With shrinking glance she lifts her lids.
 Lift up thy heart! That longed-for port of rest
 Is here. It is a day of solemn joy.

Cassandra. There was a day of solemn joy for
 Troy. 850

Agamemnon. Before the altars reverence due we pay.

Cassandra. Before the altars has my father died.

Agamemnon. We pray alike to Jove.

Cassandra. Hercean Jove?

Agamemnon. Thinkst thou, thou seest Ilium once
 again?

Cassandra. And Priam.

Agamemnon. 'Tis not Troy.

Cassandra. Where Helen is 855

Is Troy.

Agamemnon. Fear not the lady, hapless slave.

Cassandra. My freedom waits.

Agamemnon. No danger threatens thee.

Cassandra. Great danger thee.

Agamemnon. What can a victor fear?

Cassandra. What fears he not?

Agamemnon. O faithful band of slaves,

Restrain her till the god departs from her, 860

Lest in her helpless raving she should sin.

O father, who dost hurl the lightning's wrath,

Who drivest in thy train the clouds, who reignst

In earth and heaven, to whom the victor brings

His spoil in triumph, thee I venerate ; 865

And thee, Argolic Juno, sister, wife

Of mighty Jove, with votive offerings

And gifts from Araby, on bended knee,

I gladly worship.

SCENE III

Chorus of Argive Women.

O Argos, by thy noble citizens 870

Ennobled, Argos ever well beloved

By angry stepdame, thou dost foster still

Great nurslings. Once unequal, thou dost now

Equal the gods: thy glorious Hercules

Has by his twelve great labors won a place 875

In heaven ; for him Jove, shattering nature's laws,

Doubled the hours of the dewy night,
 And bade the sun to drive his flying car
 Later, and bade thy steeds to turn again
 Slowly, O pale Diana. That bright star, 880
 Whose name alternately is changed, returned
 And marveled to be called the evening star.
 Aurora stirred at the accustomed hour,
 But sinking back she laid her drowsy head
 Upon her aged husband's breast. The east 885
 Felt, and the west, that Hercules was come.
 Not in a single night was such an one
 Begotten. The swift moving world stood still
 For thee, O child, inheritor of heaven.
 The lion of Nemæa, by thy arm 890
 Pressed earthward, knew thee as the Thunderer's son ;
 And the Parrhasian stag, that so laid waste
 Arcadia's meadows, knew thee ; the fierce bull,
 That groaning left Dictæan pastures, knew ;
 Killed by Alcides was the fruitful snake, 895
 He bade it ne'er again to rise from death.
 With taunts he crushed beneath his falling club
 The brothers twain and the three monsters dread,
 From one breast borne, and to the east he brought
 His Spanish spoil—the three-formed Geryon. 900
 He drove the Thracian steeds ; the tyrant fed
 Not with the grass that grows by Strymon's stream
 Or Hebrus' banks his herd ; that cruel one
 Offered his savage beasts the blood of guests ;
 The ruler's blood at last made red those jaws. 905
 Untamed Hippolyte beheld the spoil
 Snatched from her breast ; the fierce Stymphalian birds
 Fell smitten from the clouds ; the tree, that bore
 The golden apples never plucked before,

Feared greatly, and fled back into the air 910
With lightened boughs. The sleepless guardian heard
With fear the rattling of the golden fruit
Only when Hercules, enriched with spoil,
Of yellow gold, had left the orchards bare.
Dragged to the light of day by triple chain, 915
The dog of hell was silent and barked not
From any mouth—he feared the unknown day.
The lying house of Dardanus succumbed
Before thee, learned thy bow was to be feared.
When thou wast leader, in as many days 920
Troy fell, as it had taken years before.

ACT V

SCENE I

Cassandra, Chorus.

Cassandra. Great deeds are being done within ;
not less

Than those of Troy's ten years. Ah, what is this?
Up, up, my soul! take thou the seer's reward:
We conquered Phrygians conquer! It is well! 925
Troy rises from its ashes! In thy fall,
Great parent, thou hast dragged Mycenæ down,
Thy conqueror flees. To my foreseeing eye
Ne'er came a clearer vision: lo, I see,
Am present, in the vision I rejoice. 930
No doubtful dream deceives me now, I see!
Tables are spread within the kingly halls,
As once the Phrygian's last feast was spread;
The couch with Ilian purple shines, they drink
From gold the wine of old Assaracus. 935
Lo, decked in broidered suit the proud one lies,
He wears the kingly robe that Priam wore;
His wife entreats him now to put aside.
The garments of his foes and wear instead
The toga woven by his faithful spouse. 940
I fear, my spirit at the vision shrinks;
Will he, the exile and adulterer, slay

The king and husband? Vengeance comes at last!
The festival shall see the master's death,
And blood shall be commingled with the wine ; 945
The garment at the murderer's wish put on
Shall give him over, bound by treachery,
To death ; its meshes bind his hands, his head
Its loose impenetrable folds surround ;
Manlike she stabs his side, but with a hand 950
That trembles, nor stabs deep, the dagger stops
Midway the wound. But as in lofty wood
The bristling boar, when captured, strives in vain
For freedom and in struggling tighter draws
His chains and rages vainly, so he strives 955
To loose the flowing folds that everywhere
Imprison, seeks to find his enemy.
The child of Tyndarus in madness grasps
The two-edged ax ; as sacrificing priest
Before the altar fixes with his eyes 960
The bullock's neck before he strikes the blow,
So either way she aims her weapon's stroke.
It falls, 'tis done. His partly severed head
Hangs by a slender thread, here from his trunk
Gushes the blood, there fall his groaning lips. 965
Not yet the murderers cease, the lifeless form
He seeks and mangles, she adds needless stabs ;
Each in such crime is worthy of his own,
He is Thyestes' son, the sister she
Of Helen. Lo, the sun uncertain stands 970
Whether he pass along his wonted way,
Whether the Thyestean path he take.

SCENE II

Orestes, Cassandra, Electra, Chorus.

Electra. O one avenger of thy father's death,
 Fly, fly, and shun thy foes' death-dealing hands ;
 Our house is ruined and the kingdom falls! 975
 What guest is this that drives his flying car?
 O brother, in my garments hide thyself.
 Yet, fool, why fly? A stranger dost thou fear?
 Fear those at home. Orestes, put aside
 Thy fears, it is a friend whom I behold, 980
 A sure and faithful friend.

SCENE III

*Strophius, Pylades, Orestes, Electra, Cassandra,
 Chorus.*

Strophius. I, Strophius, am from Phocis come
 again ;
 Honored at Elis with the victor's crown,
 I come to welcome back with joy the friend
 By whose hand smitten, after ten long years, 985
 At last has Ilium fallen. Who is this
 Whose mournful face is numbed with sorrow's tears?
 What sorrowful and fearful maid is this?
 I know the royal child ; what cause to weep,
 Electra, in this house of joy?
Electra. Alas! 990
 My father, by my mother's crime destroyed,
 Lies dead, and now to share his father's death
 The son is sought. Ægisthus now controls
 The palace, where he came with base desires. 994
Strophius. Alas! No happiness abides for long!

Electra. I pray thee, by my father's memory,
And by the scepter known through all the world,
And by the fickle gods, take far away
Orestes ; hide him, 'tis a pious theft.

Strophæus. Though Agamemnon's murder makes
me fear 1000

Like slaughter, I will hide thee willingly,

Orestes. From my forehead take the crown,
The decoration of Olympic games ;

And in thy right hand take the victor's palm,

Hiding thy head behind the leafy branch, 1005

And may this palm, gift of Pisæan Jove,

Offer at once an omen and a shield.

And thou, Pylades, in thy father's car

Sitting as comrade, of thy father learn

The faithfulness that friendship ever owes. 1010

Ye steeds whom Greece has testified are swift,

Flee, flee this dreadful spot, in headlong flight.

SCENE IV

Electra, Cassandra, Chorus.

Electra. He goes, he has escaped, the flying car
Already disappears before my gaze.

My enemies I now can safely wait ; 1015

Freely I offer now my hand to death.

The bloody conqueror of her husband comes,

Her garments dyed with slaughter, even now

Her hands are red with recent blood, her face

Is dark with murder. To the altars' foot 1020

I go. Cassandra, priestess, let me kneel

With thee, since equally with thee I fear.

SCENE V

Ægisthus, Clytemnestra, Electra, Cassandra, Chorus.

Clytemnestra. Foe of thy mother, bold and impious
child,

What custom is it bids a virgin seek

This public place?

Electra. A virgin, I have fled 1025

The dwelling of adulterers.

Clytemnestra. Who believes

In thy virginity?

Electra. Because thy child?

Clytemnestra. Be humble with thy mother.

Electra. Dost thou teach

Thy daughter duty?

Clytemnestra. Thou hast manly force,

A haughty heart, but thou shalt learn to show, 1030

Subdued by torture, all thy woman's soul.

Electra. Perchance I am deceived, yet seems the
sword

A woman's weapon.

Clytemnestra. Mad one, dost thou think

That thou with us art equal?

Electra. Sayest thou, us?

What other Agamemnon hast thou found? 1035

Speak as a widow, husband hast thou none.

Clytemnestra. An impious maid's unbridled tongue
the queen

Will tame. Make answer swift, where is my son?

Thy brother, where?

Electra. Beyond Mycenæ gone. 1039

Clytemnestra. Now give me back my son.

Electra. Give back to me

My father.

Clytemnestra. Tell me where he is concealed.

Electra. In safety ; calm, and fearing no new reign.
For honorable mother 'tis enough.

Clytemnestra. Not for an angry one. To-day thou diest.

Electra. Yet die I by thy hand. Behold I leave
The altars, if it pleases thee to plunge 1046
Within my heart the steel, I face the blow ;
Or wouldst thou, as one smites the sacrifice,
My bowed neck smite ? Ready it waits the wound.
All things have been made ready for the crime ; 1050
In this blood wash that foul right hand made wet
With husband's murder.

Clytemnestra. Sharer of my realm
And of my danger, come ; Ægisthus, come.
Undutifully does my child insult
And wound her mother, and she hides my son. 1055

Ægisthus. Mad girl, no more assail thy mother's
ears
With words insulting and with hateful speech.

Electra. Will even one most skilled in basest
crimes,
One born through crime, of name ambiguous,
At once his father's grandchild, sister's son, 1060
Instruct ?

Clytemnestra. Ægisthus, dost thou hesitate
To shear away her impious head with steel ?
Let her give up her brother or her life.

Ægisthus. In a dark prison shall she pass her years,
And torn by every torture shall desire, 1065
Perchance, to render up the one she hides.
Helpless, imprisoned, poor, and sunk in filth,
Before her marriage widowed, and by all

Hated, an exile, heaven's air denied,
Though late, she will at last succumb to ills. 1070

Electra. Grant death.

Ægisthus. If thou wouldst shun it, I would grant.
Who puts an end to punishment by death
Is skill-less tyrant.

Electra. Is aught worse than death?

Ægisthus. Life, if thou long'st for death. Slaves,
seize the maid

And having carried her afar from here, 1075
Beyond Mycenæ, to the realm's last bound,
Chain her within a cavern fenced about
With gloomy night, that so imprisonment
May finally subdue the restless maid.

Clytemnestra. The captive mistress, the king's con-
cubine, 1080

Shall pay the penalty of death ; away !
Drag her away, that she may follow still
The husband torn from me.

Cassandra. Nay drag me not,
I will myself precede thee, for I haste
To be the first who to my Phrygian friends 1085
Shall bear the news : the sea with wreckage strewn,
Mycenæ taken, and the king who led
A thousand leaders dead by his wife's hand,
Cut down by lust and fraud. I would not stay.
Oh, snatch me hence ! I thank you and rejoice 1090
That I have lived so long beyond the fall
Of dear-loved Troy.

Clytemnestra. Peace, raging one.

Cassandra. Like rage
Shall fall on thee.



THYESTES

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

ATREUS.

THYESTES.

SPIRIT OF THE ELDER TANTALUS.

PLISTHENES,

TANTALUS, } Sons of Thyestes.

A BOY,

MEGÆRA.

MESSENGER.

SERVANT.

CHORUS OF MEN OF MYCENÆ.

SCENE: *Before the Palace of Atreus.*

THYESTES

ACT I

SCENE I

Spirit of Tantalus, Megæra.

Spirit. Who drags me from my place among the shades,

Where with dry lips I seek the flying waves
What hostile god again shows Tantalus
His hated palace? Has some worse thing come
Than thirst amid the waters or the pangs 5
Of ever-gnawing hunger? Must the stone,
The slippery burden borne by Sisyphus,
Weigh down my shoulders, or Ixion's wheel
Carry my limbs around in its swift course,
Or must I fear Tityus' punishment? 10
Stretched in a lofty cave he feeds dun birds
Upon his vitals which they tear away,
And night renews whatever day destroyed,
And thus he offers them full feast again.
Against what evil have I been reserved? 15
Stern judge of Hades, whosoe'er thou art
Who metest to the dead due penalties,
If something can be added more than pain,
Seek that at which the grim custodian
Of this dark prison must himself feel fear, 20

Something from which sad Acheron shall shrink,
 Before whose horror I myself must fear ;
 For many sprung from me, who shall outsin
 Their house, who, daring deeds undared by me,
 Make me seem innocent, already come. 25
 Whatever impious deed this realm may lack
 My house will bring ; while Pelops' line remains
 Minos shall never be unoccupied.

Magæra. Go, hated shade, and drive thy sin-
 stained home
 To madness ; let the sword try every crime, 30
 And pass from hand to hand ; nor let there be
 Limit to rage and shame ; let fury blind
 Urge on their thoughts ; let parents' hearts be hard
 Through madness, long iniquity be heaped
 Upon the children, let them never know 35
 Leisure to hate old crimes, let new ones rise,
 Many in one ; let sin while punished grow ;
 From the proud brothers let the throne depart,
 Then let it call the exiled home again.
 Let the dark fortunes of a violent house 40
 Among unstable kings be brought to naught.
 Let evil fortune on the mighty fall,
 The wretched come to power ; let chance toss
 The kingdom with an ever-changing tide
 Where'er it will. Exiled because of crime, 45
 When god would give them back their native land
 Let them through crime reach home, and let them
 hate
 Themselves as others hate them. Let them deem
 No crime forbidden when their passions rage ;
 Let brother greatly fear his brother's hand, 50
 Let parents fear their sons, and let the sons

Feel fear of parents, children wretched die,
 More wretchedly be born ; let wife rebel
 Against her husband, wars pass over seas,
 And every land be wet with blood poured forth ; 55
 Let lust, victorious, o'er great kings exult
 And basest deeds be easy in thy house ;
 Let right and truth and justice be no more
 'Twixt brothers. Let not heaven be immune—
 Why shine the stars within the firmament 60
 To be a source of beauty to the world ?
 Let night be different, day no more exist.
 O'erthrow thy household gods, bring hatred, death,
 Wild slaughter, with thy spirit fill the house,
 Deck the high portals, let the gates be green 65
 With laurel, fires for thy advent meet
 Shall glow, crimes worse than Thracian shall be done.
 Why idle lies the uncle's stern right hand ?
 Thyestes has not yet bewept his sons ;
 When will they be destroyed ? Lo, even now 70
 Upon the fire the brazen pot shall boil,
 The members shall be broken into parts,
 The father's hearth with children's blood be wet,
 The feast shall be prepared. Thou wilt not come
 Guest at a feast whose crime is new to thee : 75
 To-day we give thee freedom ; satisfy
 Thy hunger at those tables, end thy fast.
 Blood mixed with wine shall in thy sight be drunk,
 Food have I found that even thou wouldst shun.
 Stay ! Whither dost thou rush ?

Spirit.

To stagnant pools, 80

Rivers and waters ever slipping by,
 To the fell trees that will not give me food.
 Let me go hence to my dark prison-house,

Let me, if all too little seems my woe,
 Seek other shores ; within thy channels' midst 85
 And by thy floods of fire hemmed about,
 O Phlegethon, permit me to be left.
 O ye who suffer by the fates' decree
 Sharp penalties, O thou who, filled with fear,
 Within the hallowed cave dost wait the fall 90
 Of the impending mountain, thou who dreadst
 The ravening lion's open jaws, the hand
 Of cruel furies that encompass thee,
 Thou who, half burned, dost feel their torch applied,
 Hear ye the voice of Tantalus who knows : 95
 Love ye your penalties ! Ah, woe is me,
 When shall I be allowed to flee to hell ?

Megara. First into dread confusion throw thy house,

Bring with thee battle and the sword and love,
 Strike thou the king's wild heart with frantic rage. 100

Spirit. 'Tis right that I should suffer punishment,
 But not that I myself be punishment.
 Like a death-dealing vapor must I go
 Out of the riven earth, or like a plague
 Most grievous to the people, or a pest 105
 Widespread, I bring my children's children crime.
 Great father of the gods, our father too—
 However much our sonship cause thee shame—
 Although my too loquacious tongue should pay
 Due punishment for sin, yet will I speak : 110
 Stain not, my kinsmen, holy hands with blood,
 The altars with unholy sacrifice
 Pollute not. I will stay and ward off crime.

[*To Megara.*] Why dost thou terrify me with thy torch,

And fiercely threaten with thy writhing snakes? 115
 Why dost thou stir the hunger in my reins?
 My heart is burning with the fire of thirst,
 My parched veins feel the flame.

Megara. Through all thy house
 Scatter this fury; thus shall they, too, rage,
 And, mad with anger, thirst by turns to drink 120
 Each other's blood. Thy house thy coming feels
 And trembles at thy execrable touch.
 It is enough; depart to hell's dark caves
 And to thy well-known river. Earth is sad
 And burdened by thy presence. Backward forced,
 Seest thou not the waters leave the streams, 126
 How all the banks are dry, how fiery winds
 Drive the few scattered clouds? The foliage pales,
 And every branch is bare, the fruits are fled.
 And where the Isthmus has been wont to sound 130
 With the near waters, roaring on each side,
 And cutting off the narrow strip of land,
 Far from the shore is heard the sound remote.
 Now Lerna's waters have been backward drawn,
 Sacred Alpheus' stream is seen no more, 135
 Cithæron's summit stands untouched with snow,
 And Argos fears again its former thirst.
 Lo, Titan's self is doubtful—shall he drive
 His horses upward, bring again the day?
 It will but rise to die. 140

SCENE II

Chorus.

If any god still cherish love for Greece,
 Argos, and Pisa for her chariots famed,

If any cherishes the Isthmian realm,
 And the twin havens, and the parted seas,
 If any love Taygetus' bright snows 145
 That shine afar, which northern winter lays
 Upon its highest summits and the breath
 Of summer trade winds welcome to the sails
 Melts, let him whom Alpheus' ice-cold stream
 Touches, well known for his Olympic course, 150
 Wield the calm influence of his heavenly power,
 Nor suffer crimes in constant series come.
 Let not a grandson, readier for that crime
 E'en than his father's father, follow him,
 Nor let the father's error please the sons. 155
 Let thirsty Tantalus' base progeny,
 Wearied at length, give up their fierce attempts;
 Enough of crime! No more is right of worth,
 And common wrongs of little moment seem;
 The traitor Myrtilus betrayed his lord 160
 And slew him—by such faith as he had shown
 Himself dragged down, he gave the sea a name;
 To ships on the Ægean never tale
 Was better known. Met by the cruel sword,
 Even while he ran to gain his father's kiss, 165
 The little son was slain; he early fell
 A victim to the hearth, by thy right hand,
 O Tantalus, cut off that thou mightst spread
 Such feasts before the gods. Eternal thirst
 And endless famine followed on the feast; 170
 Nor can a worthier punishment be found
 For savage feast like that. With empty maw
 Stands weary Tantalus, above his head
 Hangs ready food, more swift to take its flight
 Than Phineus' birds; on every side it hangs; 175

The tree beneath the burden of its fruit
Bending and trembling, shuns his open mouth ;
He though so eager, brooking no delay,
Yet oft deceived, neglects to touch the tree,
And drops his head and presses close his lips, 180
And shuts his hunger in behind clenched teeth.
The ripe fruit taunts him from the languid boughs,
And whets his hunger till it urges him
To stretch again his hand oft stretched in vain.
Then the whole harvest of the bended boughs 185
Is lifted out of reach. Thirst rises then,
More hard to bear than hunger, when his blood
Is hot within him and his eyes aflame ;
Wretched he stands striving to touch his lips
To the near waters, but the stream retreats, 190
Forsakes him when he strives to follow it,
And leaves him in dry sands ; his eager lips
Drink but the dust.

ACT II

SCENE I

Atreus, Slave.

Atreus. O slothful, indolent, weak, unavenged
(This last I deem for tyrants greatest wrong 195
In great affairs), after so many crimes,
After thy brother's treachery to thee,
After the breaking of all laws of right,
Dost thou, O angry Atreus, waste the time
In idle lamentations? All the world 200
Should echo with the uproar of thy arms,
And either sea should bear thy ships of war ;
The fields and cities should be bright with flame ;
The flashing sword should everywhere be drawn ;
All Greece shall with our horsemen's tread resound ; 205
Woods shall not hide the foe nor towers built
Upon the highest summits of the hills ;
Mycenæ's citizens shall leave the town
And sing the warsong ; he shall die hard death
Who gives that hated head a hiding-place. 210
This palace even, noble Pelops' home,
Shall fall, if it must be, and bury me
If only on my brother too it fall.
Up, do a deed which none shall e'er approve,
But one whose fame none shall e'er cease to speak. 215
Some fierce and bloody crime must now be dared,
Such as my brother seeing shall wish his.

A wrong is not avenged but by worse wrong.
 What deed can be so wild 'tis worse than his?
 Does he lie humbled? Does he feel content 220
 When fortune smiles, or tranquil when she frowns?
 I know the tameless spirit of the man,
 Not to be bent but broken, therefore seek
 Revenge before he makes himself secure,
 Renews his strength, lest he should fall on me 225
 When I am unaware. Or kill, or die!
 Crime is between us to be seized by one.

Slave. Fearest thou not the people's hostile words?

Atreus. Herein is greatest good of royal power:
 The populace not only must endure 230
 Their master's deeds, but praise them.

Slave. Fear shall make
 Those hostile who were first compelled to praise;
 But he who seeks the fame of true applause
 Would rather by the heart than voice be praised.

Atreus. The lowly oft enjoy praise truly meant, 235
 The mighty ne'er know aught but flattery.
 The people oft must will what they would not.

Slave. The king should wish for honesty and right;
 Then there is none who does not wish with him.

Atreus. When he who rules must wish for right
 alone 240
 He hardly rules, except on sufferance.

Slave. When reverence is not, nor love of law,
 Nor loyalty, integrity, nor truth,
 The realm is insecure.

Atreus. Integrity,
 Truth, loyalty, are private virtues; kings 245
 Do as they will.

Slave. O deem it wrong to harm

A brother, even though he be most base.

Atreus. No deed that is unlawful to be done
 Against a brother but may lawfully
 Be done against this man. What has he left 250
 Untainted by his crime? Where has he spared
 To do an impious deed? He took my wife
 Adulterously, he took my realm by stealth,
 The earnest of the realm he gained by fraud,
 By fraud he brought confusion to my home. 255
 There is in Pelops' stalls a noble sheep,
 A magic ram, lord of the fruitful herd;
 O'er all his body hangs the golden fleece.
 In him each king sprung from the royal line
 Of Tantalus his golden scepter holds, 260
 Who has the ram possesses too the realm,
 The fortunes of the palace follow him.
 As fits a sacred thing, he feeds apart,
 In a safe meadow which a wall surrounds
 Hiding the pasture with its fateful stones. 265
 The faithless one, daring a matchless crime,
 Stole him away and with him took my wife,
 Accomplice in his sin. From this has flowed
 Every disaster; exiled and in fear
 I've wandered through my realm; no place is safe 270
 From brother's plots; my wife has been defiled,
 The quiet of my realm has been disturbed,
 My house is troubled, and the ties of blood
 Are insecure, of nothing am I sure
 Unless it be my brother's enmity. 275
 Why hesitate? At length be strong to act.
 Look upon Tantalus, on Pelops look;
 To deeds like theirs these hands of mine are called.
 Tell me, how shall I slay that cursed one?

Slave. Slain by the sword let him spew forth his
soul. 280

Atreus. Thou tellest the end of punishment, I wish
The punishment itself. Mild tyrants slay ;
Death is a longed-for favor in my realm.

Slave. Hast thou no piety ?

Atreus. If e'er it dwelt
Within our home, let piety depart. 285
Let the grim company of Furies come,
Jarring Erinnys and Megæra dread
Shaking their torches twain. My breast burns not
With anger hot enough. I fain would feel
Worse horrors.

Slave. What new exile dost thou plot, 290
In thy mad rage ?

Atreus. No deed that keeps the bounds
Of former evils, I will leave no crime
Untried, and none is great enough for me.

Slave. The sword ?

Atreus. 'Tis poor.

Slave. Or fire ?

Atreus. 'Tis not enough.

Slave. What weapon then shall arm such hate as
thine? 295

Atreus. Thyestes' self.

Slave. This ill is worse than hate.

Atreus. I own it. In my breast a tumult reigns ;
It rages deep within, and I am urged
I know not whither, yet it urges me.
Earth from its lowest depths sends forth a groan, 300
It thunders though the daylight is serene,
The whole house shakes as though the house were rent,
The trembling Lares turn away their face.

This shall be done, this evil shall be done,
Which, gods, ye fear.

Slave. What is it thou wilt do? 305

Atreus. I know not what great passion in my heart,
Wilder than I have known, beyond the bounds
Of human nature, rises, urges on

My slothful hands. I know not what it is,
'Tis something great. Yet be it what it may, 310

Make haste, my soul! Fit for Thyestes' hand
This crime would be; 'tis worthy Atreus, too,
And both shall do it. Tereus' house has seen
Such shocking feasts. I own the crime is great,
And yet it has been done; some greater crime 315

Let grief invent. Inspire thou my soul
O Daulian Procne, thou wast sister too;
Our cause is like, assist, impel my hand.

The father, hungrily, with joy shall tear
His children, and shall eat their very flesh; 320

'Tis well, it is enough. This punishment
Is so far pleasing. But where can he be?

And why is Atreus so long innocent?

Already all the sacrifice I see,
As in a picture, see the morsels placed 325

Within the father's mouth. Wherefore, my soul,
Art thou afraid? Why fail before the deed?

Forward! It must be done. Himself shall do
What is in such a deed the greater crime.

Slave. But captured by what wiles, will he consent
To put his feet within our toils? He deems 331
That all are hostile.

Atreus. 'Twere not possible
To capture him but that he'd capture me.
He hopes to gain my kingdom; through this hope

He will make haste to meet the thunderbolts 335
 Of threatening Jove, in this hope will endure
 The swelling whirlpool's threats, and dare to go
 Within the Lybian Syrtes' doubtful shoals,
 To see again his brother, last and worst
 Of evils deemed ; this hope shall lead him on. 340

Slave. Who shall persuade him he may come in
 peace?

Whose word will he believe?

Atreus. Malicious hope

Is credulous, yet I will give my sons
 A message they shall to their uncle bear :
 ' The wandering exile, leaving chance abodes, 345
 May for a kingdom change his misery,
 May reign in Argos, sharer of my throne.'
 But if Thyestes sternly spurn my prayers,
 His artless children, wearied by their woes
 And easily persuaded, with their plea 350
 Will overcome him ; his old thirst for rule,
 Beside sad poverty and heavy toil,
 With weight of evil, will subdue his soul
 However hard it be.

Slave. Time will have made
 His sorrow light.

Atreus. Thou errest ; sense of ills 355
 Increases daily. To endure distress
 Is easy, but to bear it to the end
 Is hard.

Slave. Choose others for thy messengers
 In this dread plan.

Atreus. Youth freely dares the worst.

Slave. What now thou teachest them in enmity 360
 Against their uncle, they may later do

Against their father ; evil deeds return
Full oft upon their author.

Atrous. If they learned
The way of treachery and crime from none,
Possession of the throne would teach it them. 365
Art thou afraid their natures will grow base ?
So were they born. That which thou callest wild
And cruel, and deemst hardly to be done,
Ruthless, nor showing honor for god's laws,
Perchance is even now against ourselves 370
Attempted.

Slave. Shall thy sons know what they do ?

Atrous. Discretion is not found with so few years.
They might perhaps discover all the guile ;
Silence is learned through long and evil years.

Slave. The very ones through whom thou wouldst
deceive 375
Another thou deceivest ?

Atrous. That themselves
May be exempt from crime or fault of mine ;
Why should I mix my children in my sins ?
My hatred shall unfold itself in me.
Yet say not so, thou doest ill, my soul ; 380
If thine thou sparest, thou sparest also his.
My minister shall Agamemnon be,
And know my plan, and Menelaus too
Shall know his father's plans and further them.
Through this crime will I prove if they be mine ; 385
If they refuse the contest nor consent
To my revenge, but call him uncle, then
I'll know he is their father. It shall be.
But oft a frightened look lays bare the heart,
Great plans may be unwillingly betrayed ; 390

They shall not know how great affairs they aid.
Hide thou our undertaking.

Slave. Scarce were need
That I should be admonished ; in my breast
Both fear and loyalty will keep it hid,
But loyalty the rather.

395

SCENE II

Chorus.

The ancient race of royal Inachus
At last has laid aside fraternal threats.
What madness drove you, that by turns you shed
Each other's blood and sought to mount the throne
By crime? You know not, eager for high place, 400
What kingly station means. It is not wealth
That makes the king, nor robes of Tyrian dye,
'Tis not the crown upon the royal brow,
Nor gates made bright with gold ; a king is he
Whose hard heart has forgotten fear and pain, 405
Whom impotent ambition does not move,
Nor the inconstant favor of the crowd,
Who covets nothing that the west affords,
Nor aught that Tagus' golden waves wash up
From its bright channels, nor the grain thrashed out
Upon the glowing Libyan threshing-floors, 411
Who neither fears the falling thunderbolt,
Nor Eurus stirring all the sea to wrath,
Nor windy Adriatic's swelling rage ;
Who is not conquered by a soldier's lance, 415
Nor the drawn sword ; who seated on safe heights,
Sees everything beneath him ; who makes haste

Freely to meet his fate, nor grieves to die.
Let kings who vex the scattered Scythians come,
Who hold the Red Sea's shore, the pearl-filled sea,
Or who intrenched upon the Caspian range 421
To bold Sarmatians close the way, who breast
The Danube's waves, or those who dare pursue
And spoil the noble Seres where'er they dwell.
The mind a kingdom is ; there is no need 425
Of horse, or weapon, or the coward dart
Which from afar the Parthian hurls and flees—
Or seems to flee, no need to overthrow
Cities with engines that hurl stones afar,
When one possesses in himself his realm. 430
Whoever will may on the slippery heights
Of empire stand, but I with sweet repose
Am satisfied, rejoice in gentle ease,
And, to my fellow citizens unknown,
My life shall flow in calm obscurity, 435
And when, untouched by storm, my days have passed,
Then will I die, a common citizen,
In good old age. Death seemeth hard to him
Who dies but too well known to all the world,
Yet knowing not himself. 440

ACT III

SCENE I

Thyestes, Plisthenes, Tantalus, A boy.

Thyestes. The longed-for dwelling of my native land
And, to the wretched exile greatest boon,
Rich Argos and a stretch of native soil,
And, if there yet be gods, my country's gods
I see at last ; the Cyclop's sacred towers, 445
Of greater beauty than the work of man ;
The celebrated race-course of my youth
Where oft, well known, I drove my father's car
And carried off the palm. Argos will come
To meet me, and the people come in crowds, 450
Perchance my brother Atreus too will come !
Rather return to exile in the woods
And mountain pastures, live the life of brutes
Among them. This bright splendor of the realm
With its false glitter shall not blind my eyes. 455
Look on the giver, not the gift alone.
In fortunes which the world deemed hard I lived
Joyous and brave, now am I forced to fear,
My courage fails me, fain would I retreat,
Unwillingly I go.

Tantalus. What see I here? 460
With hesitating step my father goes,
He seems uncertain, turns away his head.

Thyestes. Why doubt, my soul ? or why so long revolve

Deliberations easy to conclude?
 In most uncertain things dost thou confide 365
 And in thy brother's realm, and stand in fear
 Of ills already conquered and found mild?
 Dost fly the troubles thou hast learned to bear?
 Now to be wretched with the shades were joy,
 Turn while thou yet hast time.

Tantalus. Why turn away? 470
 From thy loved country? Why deny thyself
 So much of happiness? His wrath forgot,
 Thy brother gives thee back the kingdom's half
 And to the jarring members of his house
 Brings peace, restores thee once more to thyself. 475

Thyestes. Thou askest why I fear; I do not know.
 I see not aught to fear and yet I fear.
 Fain would I go and yet with slothful feet
 I waver and am borne unwillingly
 Whither I would not; thus the ship propelled 480
 By oar and sail is driven from its course
 By the opposing tide.

Tantalus. Whatever thwarts
 Or hinders thee, o'ercome; see what rewards
 Are waiting thy return. Thou mayst be king.

Thyestes. Since I can die.

Tantalus. The very highest power—

Thyestes. Is naught, if thou hast come to wish
 for naught. 486

Tantalus. Thy sons shall be thy heirs.

Thyestes. No realm can have
 Two kings.

Tantalus. Does one who might be happy choose
 Unhappiness?

Thyestes. Believe me, with false name

sc. 1]

THYESTES

329

Does power deceive ; and vain it is to fear 490

Laborious fortunes. High in place, I feared,

Yea, feared the very sword upon my side.

How good it is to be the foe of none,

To lie upon the ground, in safety eat.

Crime enters not the cottage ; without fear 495

May food be eaten at the humble board,

Poison is drunk from gold. I speak known truth—

Ill fortune is to be preferred to good.

The humble citizen fears not my house :

It is not on the mountain summit placed, 500

Its high roofs do not shine with ivory ;

No watchman guards my sleep ; we do not fish

With fleets, nor drive the ocean from its bed

With massive walls, nor feed vile gluttony

With tribute from all peoples ; not for me 505

Are harvested the fields beyond the Getes

And Parthians ; men do not honor me

With incense, nor are altars built for me

Instead of Jove ; upon my palace roofs

No forests nod, no hot pools steam for me ; 510

Day is not spent in sleep nor night in crime

And watching. Aye, none fears me and my home,

Although without a weapon, is secure.

Great peace attends on humble circumstance ;

He has a kingdom who can be content 515

Without a kingdom.

Tantalus. If a favoring god

Give thee a realm, it should not be refused,

Nor should it be desired. Thy brother begs

That thou wouldst rule.

Thyestes. He begs? Then I must fear.

He seeks some means whereby he may betray. 520

Tantalus. Full often loyalty that was withdrawn
Is given back, and true affection gains
Redoubled strength.

Thyestes. And shall his brother love
Thyestes? Rather shall the ocean wet
The northern Bear, and the rapacious tides 525
Of the Sicilian waters stay their waves,
The harvest ripen in Ionian seas,
And black night give the earth the light of day;
Rather shall flame with water, life with death,
The winds with ocean join in faithful pact. 530

Tantalus. What fraud dost thou still fear?

Thyestes. All. Where may end
My cause for fear? His hate is as his power.

Tantalus. What power has he to harm thee?

Thyestes. For myself
I do not fear; my sons, for you I dread
My brother Atreus.

Tantalus. Dost thou fear deceit? 535

Thyestes. It is too late to seek security
When one is in the very midst of ill.
Let us begone. This one thing I affirm:
I follow you, not lead.

Tantalus. God will behold
With favor thy design; boldly advance. 540

SCENE II

Atreus, Thyestes, Plisthenes, Tantalus, A boy.

Atreus. [*Aside.*] At last the wild beast is within
my toils:
Lo, I behold him with his hated brood.

My vengeance now is sure, into my hands
 Thyestes has completely fall'n ; my joy
 Scarce can I temper, scarcely curb my wrath. 545
 Thus when the cunning Umbrian hound is held
 In leash, and tracks his prey, with lowered nose
 Searching the ground, when from afar he scents
 By slightest clue the bear, he silently
 Explores the place, submitting to be held, 550
 But when the prey is nearer, then he fights
 To free himself, and with impatient voice
 Calls the slow huntsman, straining at the leash.
 When passion hopes for blood it will not own
 Restraint ; and yet my wrath must be restrained ! 555
 See how his heavy, unkempt hair conceals
 His face, how loathsome lies his beard. Ah, well !
 Faith shall be kept. [*To Thyestes.*] To see my brother's
 face
 How glad I am ! All former wrath is past.
 From this day loyalty to family ties 560
 Shall be maintained, from this day let all hate
 Be banished from our hearts.

Thyestes. [*Aside.*] O wert thou not
 Such as thou art, all could be put aside.
 [*To Atreus.*] Atreus, I own, I own that I have done
 All thou believest ; this day's loyalty 565
 Makes me seem truly base : he sins indeed
 Who sins against a brother good as thou.
 Tears must wash out my guilt. See at thy feet
 These hands are clasped in prayer that ne'er before
 Entreated any. Let all anger cease, 570
 Let swelling rage forever be dispelled ;
 Receive these children, pledges of my faith.

Atreus. No longer clasp my knees, nay, rather seek

My warm embrace. Ye, too, the props of age,
 So young, my children, cling about my neck. 575
 And thou, put off thy raiment mean and coarse ;
 Oh, spare my sight, put on these royal robes
 Like mine, and gladly share thy brother's realm.
 This greater glory shall at last be mine :
 To my illustrious brother I give back 580
 His heritage. One holds a throne by chance,
 To give it up is noble.

Thyestes. May the gods
 Give thee, my brother, fair return for all
 Thy benefits. Alas, my wretchedness
 Forbids me to accept the royal crown, 585
 My guilty hand shrinks from the scepter's weight ;
 Let me in lesser rank unnoted live.

Atreus. This realm recovers its two kings.

Thyestes. I hold,
 O brother, all of thine the same as mine.

Atreus. Who would refuse the gifts that fortune gives ?

Thyestes. He who has learned how swiftly they
 depart. 591

Atreus. Wouldst thou refuse thy brother such
 renown ?

Thyestes. Thy glory is fulfilled, but mine still waits :
 Firm is my resolution to refuse
 The kingdom.

Atreus. I relinquish all my power 595
 Unless thou hast thy part.

Thyestes. I take it then.
 I'll wear the name of king, but law and arms
 And I shall be thy slaves, for evermore.

Atreus. Wear then upon thy head the royal crown.
 I'll give the destined victim to the gods. 600

SCENE III

Chorus.

Who would believe it? Atreus, fierce and wild,
 Savage and tameless, shrank and was amazed
 When he beheld his brother. Stronger bonds
 Than nature's laws exist not. Wars may last
 With foreign foes, but true love still will bind 605
 Those whom it once has bound. When wrath, aroused
 By some great quarrel, has dissevered friends
 And called to arms, when the light cavalry
 Advance with ringing bridles, here and there
 Shines the swift sword which, seeking fresh-shed
 blood, 610
 The raging war-god wields with frequent blows ;
 But love and loyalty subdue the sword,
 And in great peace unite unwilling hearts.
 What god gave sudden peace from so great war ?
 Throughout Mycenæ rang the crash of arms 615
 As though in civil strife, pale mothers held
 Their children to their bosoms, and the wife
 Feared for her steel-armed husband, when the sword,
 Stained with the rust acquired in long peace,
 Unwillingly obeyed his hand. One sped 620
 To strengthen falling walls, to build again
 The tottering towers, to make fast the gates
 With iron bars ; and on the battlements
 The pale watch waked through all the anxious night.
 The fear of war is worse than war itself. 625
 But threatenings of the cruel sword have ceased,
 The trumpet's deep-toned voice at last is stilled,
 The braying of the strident horn is hushed,

And to the joyous city peace returns.
 So when the northwest wind beats up the sea 630
 And from the deep the swelling waves roll in,
 Scylla from out her smitten caverns roars
 And sailors in the havens fear the flood
 That ravening Charybdis vomits forth,
 And the fierce Cyclops, dwelling on the top 635
 Of fiery *Ætna*, dreads his father's rage,
 Lest whelmed beneath the waves, the fires that roar
 Within his immemorial chimney's throat
 Should be profaned, and poor *Laertes* thinks,
 Since *Ithaca* is shaken, that his realm 640
 May be submerged ; then, if the winds subside,
 More quiet than a pool the ocean lies,
 Scattered on every side gay little skiffs
 Stretch the fair canvas of their spreading sails
 Upon the sea which, late, ships feared to cut ; 645
 And there where, shaken by the hurricane,
 The *Cyclades* were fearful of the deep,
 The fishes play. No fortune long endures :
 Sorrows and pleasures each in turn depart,
 But pleasure soonest ; from the fairest heights 650
 An hour may plunge one to the lowest depths ;
 He who upon his forehead wears a crown,
 Who nods and *Medians* lay aside the sword,
Indians, too, near neighbors of the sun,
 And *Dacians* that assail the *Parthian* horse, 655
 He holds his scepter with an anxious hand,
 Foresees the overthrow of all his joy,
 And fears uncertain time and fickle chance.
 Ye whom the ruler of the earth and sea
 Has given power over life and death, 660
 Be not so proud, a stronger threatens you

With whatsoever ills the weaker fears
From you ; each realm is by a greater rul'd.
Him whom the rising sun beholds in power
The setting sees laid low. Let none confide 665
Too much in happiness, let none despair
When he has fallen from his high estate,
For Clotho blends the evil with the good ;
She turns about all fortunes on her wheel ;
None may abide. Such favoring deities 670
No one has ever found that he may trust
To-morrow ; on his flying wheel a god
Spins our swift changing fortunes.

ACT IV

SCENE I

Messenger, Chorus.

Messenger. Oh, who will bear me headlong through
the air,

Like a swift wind, and hide me in thick cloud 675

That I no longer may behold such crime ?

O house dishonored, whose base deeds disgrace

Pelops and Tantalus !

Chorus. What news is thine ?

Messenger. What region can it be that I behold ?

Argos and Sparta to which fate assigned 680

Such loving brothers ? Corinth or the shores

Of the two seas ? The Danube that compels

The fierce Alani frequently to flee ?

Hyrcania underneath eternal snows ?

Is it the wandering Scythians' changing home ? 685

What land is this that knows such monstrous deeds ?

Chorus. Speak and declare the ill whate'er it be.

Messenger. If I have courage, if cold fear relax

Its hold upon my members. Still I see

Th' accomplished slaughter. Bear me far from hence,

O driving whirlwind ; whither day is borne 691

Bear me, torn hence !

Chorus. Control thy fear, wrung heart,

What is the deed that makes thee quake with fear ?

Speak and declare its author, I ask not

Who it may be, but which. Now quickly tell. 695

Messenger. Upon the heights a part of Pelops' house

Faces the south ; the further side of this

Lifts itself upward like a mountain top

And overlooks the city ; thence their kings

May hold the stubborn people 'neath their sway. 700

Here shines the great hall that might well contain

An army, vari-colored columns bear

Its golden architraves ; behind the room

Known to the vulgar, where the people come,

Stretch chambers rich and wide, and far within 705

Lies the arcana of the royal house,

The sacred penetralia ; here no tree

Of brilliant foliage grows, and none is trimmed ;

But yews and cypress and black ilex trees

Bend in the gloomy wood, an ancient oak 710

Rises above the grove and, eminent

Over the other trees, looks down on all

From its great height. Here the Tantalides

Are consecrated kings, and here they seek

Aid in uncertain or untoward events 715

Here hang their votive offerings, clear-toned trumps,

And broken chariots, wreckage of the sea,

And wheels that fell a prey to treachery,

And evidence of every crime the race

Has done. Here Trojan Pelops' crown is hung, 720

Here the embroidered robe from barbarous foes

Won. In the shade trickles a sluggish rill

That in the black swamp lingers lazily,

Like the unsightly waters of black Styx

By which the gods make oath. 'Tis said that here 725

The gods of the infernal regions sigh

Through all the dark night, that the place resounds

With rattling chains, and spirits of the dead
 Go wailing up and down. Here may be seen
 All dreadful things ; here wanders the great throng 730
 Of spirits of the ancient dead sent forth
 From antique tombs, and monsters fill the place
 Greater than have been known, and oft the wood
 With threefold baying echoes, oftentimes
 The house is terrible with mighty forms. 735
 Nor does the daylight put an end to fear,
 Night is eternal in the grove, and here
 The sanctity of the infernal world
 Reigns in the midst of day. Here sure response
 Is given those who seek the oracle ; 740
 From the adytum with a thundering noise
 The fatal utterance finds a passage out,
 And all the grot reëchoes the god's voice.
 Here raging Atreus entered, dragging in
 His brother's sons ; the altars were adorned— 745
 Ah, who can tell the tale ? The noble youths
 Have their hands bound behind them and their brows
 Bound with the purple fillet ; incense too
 Is there, and wine to Bacchus consecrate,
 And sacrificial knife, and salted meal ; 750
 All things are done in order, lest such crime
 Should be accomplished without fitting rites.

Chorus. Whose hand took up the sword ?

Messenger.

He is himself

The priest : He sang himself with boisterous lips
 The sacrificial song, those given to death 755
 He placed, he took the sword and wielded it ;
 Nothing was lacking to the sacrifice.
 Earth trembled, all the grove bent down its head,
 The palace nodded, doubtful where to fling

Its mighty weight, and from the left there shot 760
 A star from heaven, drawing a black train.
 The wine poured forth upon the fire was changed
 And flowed red blood ; the royal diadem
 Fell twice, yea thrice ; within the temple walls
 The ivory statues wept : all things were moved 765
 At such a deed ; himself alone unmoved,
 Atreus stood firm and faced the threatening gods.
 And now delay at last was put aside ;
 He stood before the altar, sidelong, fierce
 In gaze. As by the Ganges, in the woods, 770
 The hungry tiger stands between two bulls,
 Uncertain which one first shall feel his teeth—
 Eager for both, now here now there he turns
 His eyes and in such doubt is hungry still—
 So cruel Atreus gazes on the heads 775
 Devoted sacrifices to his rage :
 He hesitates which one shall first be slain,
 And which be immolated afterward ;
 It matters not and yet he hesitates,
 And in the order of his cruel crime 780
 Takes pleasure.

Chorus. Which is first to feel the sword ?

Messenger. Lest he should seem to fail in loyalty
 First place is given to his ancestor—
 The one named Tantalus is first to fall.

Chorus. What courage showed the youth ? How
 bore he death ? 785

Messenger. He stood unmoved, no useless prayers
 were heard.

That cruel one hid in the wound the sword,
 Pressing it deep within the victim's neck,
 Then drew it forth ; the corpse was upright still :

It hesitated long which way to fall, 790
 Then fell against the uncle. Atreus then,
 Dragging before the altar Plisthenes,
 Hurried him to his brother : with one blow
 He cut away the head ; the lifeless trunk
 Fell prone and with a whispered sound the head 795
 Rolled downward.

Chorus. Double murder thus complete,
 What did he then ? Spared he the other boy ?
 Or did he heap up crime on crime ?

Messenger. Alas !
 As crested lion in Armenian woods
 Attacks the herd, nor lays aside his wrath 800
 Though sated, but with jaws that drip with blood
 Follows the bulls, and satisfied with food
 Threatens the calves but languidly ; so threats
 Atreus, so swells his wrath, and holding still
 The sword with double murder wet, forgets 805
 Whom he attacks ; with direful hand he drives
 Right through the body and the sword, received
 Within the breast, passes straight through the back.
 He falls and with his blood puts out the fires ;
 By double wound he dies.

Chorus. O savage crime ! 810

Messenger. Art horrified ? If there the work had
 ceased,
 It had been pious.

Chorus. Could a greater crime
 Or more atrocious be by nature borne ?

Messenger. And dost thou think this was the end of
 crime ?

'Twas its beginning.

Chorus. What more could there be ? 815

Perchance he threw the bodies to wild beasts
That they might tear them, kept from funeral fire? }

Messenger. Would he had kept, would that no grave
might hide

The dead, no fire burn them, would the birds
And savage beasts might feast on such sad food! 820

That which were torment else is wished for here.

Would father's eyes unburied sons might see!

O crime incredible to every age!

O crime which future ages shall deny!

The entrails taken from the living breast 825

Tremble, the lungs still breathe, the timid heart

Throbs, but he tears its fibre, ponders well

What it foretells and notes its still warm veins.

When he at last has satisfied himself

About the victims, of his brother's feast 830

He makes secure. The mangled forms he cuts,

And from the trunk he separates the arms

As far as the broad shoulders, savagely

Lays bare the joints and cleaves apart the bones;

The heads he spares and the right hands they gave 835

In such good faith. He puts the severed limbs

Upon the spits and roasts them by slow fire;

The other parts into the glowing pot

He throws to boil them. From the food the fire

Leaps back, is twice, yea thrice, replaced and forced

At last reluctantly to do its work. 841

The liver on the spit emits shrill cries, ✓

I cannot tell whether the flesh or flame

Most deeply groaned. The troubled fire smoked,

The smoke itself, a dark and heavy cloud, 845

Rose not in air nor scattered readily;

The ugly cloud obscured the household gods.

O patient Phœbus, thou hast backward fled
 And, breaking off the light of day at noon,
 Submerged the day, but thou didst set too late. 850
 The father mangles his own sons, and eats
 Flesh of his flesh, with sin polluted lips ;
 His locks are wet and shine with glowing oil ;
 Heavy is he with wine ; the morsels stick
 Between his lips. Thyestes, this one good 855
 Amid thy evil fortunes still remains :
 Thou knowest it not. But this good too shall die.
 Let Titan, turning backward on his path,
 Lead back his chariot and with darkness hide
 This foul new crime, let blackest night arise 860
 At midday, yet the deed must come to light.
 All will be manifest.

SCENE II

Chorus.

Oh, whither, father of the earth and sky,
 Whose rising puts the glory of the night
 To flight, oh, whither dost thou turn thy path, 865
 That light has fled at midday? Phœbus, why
 Hast thou withdrawn thy beams? The evening star,
 The messenger of darkness, has not yet
 Called forth the constellations of the night,
 Not yet the westward turning course commands 870
 To free thy horses that have done their work,
 The trumpet has not yet its third call given,
 The signal of declining day, new night.
 The plowman is amazed at the swift fall
 Of supper-time, his oxen by the plow 875

Are yet unwearied ; from thy path in heaven ,
 What drives thee, O Apollo? What the cause
 That forces from their wonted way thy steeds?
 Though conquered, do the giants strive again
 In war, hell's prison being opened wide? 880
 Or does Tityus in his wounded breast
 Renew his ancient wrath? The mountains rent,
 Does Titan's son, Typhœus, stretch again
 His giant body? Is a pathway built
 By Macedonian giants to the sky, 885
 On Thracian Ossa is Mount Pelion piled?
 The ancient order of the universe
 Has perished! rise and setting will not be!
 Eos, the dewy mother of the dawn,
 Wont to the god of day to give the reins, 890
 Sees with amaze her kingdom overthrown,
 She knows not how to bathe the wearied steeds,
 Nor dip the smoking horses in the sea.
 The setting sun himself, amazed, beholds
 Aurora, and commands the darkness rise 895
 Ere night is ready, the bright stars rise not,
 Nor do the heavens show the faintest light,
 Nor does the morn dissolve the heavy shades.
 Whate'er it be would it were only night!
 Shaken with mighty fear my bosom quakes, 900
 Lest all the world to ruin should be hurled,
 And formless chaos cover gods and men,
 And nature once again enfold and hide
 The land and sea and starry firmament.
 With the upspringing of its deathless torch 905
 Bringing the seasons, never more shall come
 The king of stars and give the waiting world
 Changes of summer and of winter's cold ;

No more shall Luna meet the sun's bright flame
 And take away the terror of the night, 910
 And running through a briefer circuit pass
 His brother's car; into one gulf shall fall
 The heaped-up throng of gods.
 The zodiac, pathway of the sacred stars,
 Which cuts the zones obliquely, shall behold 915
 The falling stars and fall itself from heaven.
 Aries, who comes again in early spring
 And with warm zephyr swells the sails, shall fall
 Headlong into the sea through which he bore
 Timorous Hella; and the Bull, that wears 920
 The Hyades upon its shining brow,
 Shall with himself drag down the starry Twins
 And Cancer's claws; the Lion, glowing hot,
 That Hercules once conquered, shall again
 Fall from the skies; and to the earth she left 925
 The Virgin too shall fall, and the just Scales,
 And with them drag the churlish Scorpion.
 Old Chiron, who holds fixed the feathered dart
 In the Thessalian bow, shall loose his shaft
 From the snapped bowstring, and cold Capricorn 930
 Who brings the winter's cold shall fall, and break
 For thee, whoe'er thou art, thy water-jug,
 Thou Water-bearer; with thee too shall fall
 The Fishes, last of stars; and Charles's Wain,
 That never yet has sunk below the sea, 935
 Falling shall plunge beneath the ocean wave.
 The slippery Dragon, that between the Bears
 Winds like a winding river, shall descend;
 And, with the Dragon joined, the Lesser Bear
 So icy cold, and slow Boötes too, 940
 Already tottering to his overthrow,

sc. 11]

THYESTES

345

Shall fall from heaven with his heavy wain.

Out of so many do we seem alone

Worthy to be beneath the universe

Buried, when heaven itself is overthrown ?

945

In our day has the end of all things come ?

Created were we for a bitter fate,

Whether we've banished or destroyed the sun.

Let lamentation cease, depart base fear ;

Eager for life is he who would not die

950

Even though with him all the world should fall.

ACT V

SCENE I

Atreus.

High above all and equal to the stars
I move, my proud head touches heaven itself ;
At last I hold the crown, at last I hold
My father's throne. Now I abandon you, 955
Ye gods, for I have touched the highest point
Of glory possible. It is enough.
Ev'n I am satisfied. Why satisfied ?
No shame withholds me, day has been withdrawn ;
Act while the sky is dark. Would I might keep 960
The gods from flight, and drag them back by force
That all might see the feast that gives revenge.
It is enough the father shall behold.
Though daylight be unwilling to abide,
Yet will I take from thee the dark that hides 965
Thy miseries ; too long with merry look
Thou liest at thy feast : enough of wine,
Enough of food, Thyestes. There is need,
In this thy crowning ill, thou be not drunk
With wine. Slaves, open wide the temple doors, 970
And let the house of feasting open lie.
I long to see his color when he sees
His dead sons' heads, to hear his words that flow
With the first shock of sorrow, to behold
How, stricken dumb, he sits with rigid form. 975

This is the recompense of all my toil.
 I do not wish to see his wretchedness
 Save as it grows upon him. The wide hall
 Is bright with many a torch ; supine he lies
 On gold and purple, his left hand supports 980
 His head that is so heavy now with wine ;
 He vomits. Mightiest of the gods am I,
 And king of kings ! my wish has been excelled !
 Full is he, in the silver cup he lifts .
 The wine. Spare not to drink, there still remains 985
 Some of the victims' blood, the old wine's red
 Conceals it ; with this cup the feast shall end.
 His children's blood mixed with the wine he drinks ;
 He would have drunken mine. Lo, now he sings,
 Sings festal songs, his mind is dimmed with wine. 990

SCENE II :

Atreus, Thyestes.

Thyestes. By long grief dulled, put by thy cares, my heart,

Let fear and sorrow fly and bitter need,
 Companion of thy timorous banishment,
 And shame, hard burden of afflicted souls.
 Whence thou hast fallen profits more to know 995
 Than whither ; great is he who with firm step
 Moves on the plain when fallen from the height ;
 He who, oppressed by sorrows numberless
 And driven from his realm, with unbent neck
 Carries his burdens, not degenerate 1000
 Or conquered, who stands firm beneath the weight
 Of all his burdens, he is great indeed.

Now scatter all the clouds of bitter fate,
 Put by all signs of thy unhappy days,
 In happy fortunes show a happy face, 1005
 Forget the old Thyestes. Ah, this vice
 Still follows misery: never to trust
 In happy days; though better fortunes come,
 Those who have borne afflictions find it hard
 To joy in better days. What holds me back, 1010
 Forbids me celebrate the festal tide?
 What cause of grief, arising causelessly,
 Bids me to weep? What art thou that forbids
 That I should crown my head with festal wreath?
 It does forbid, forbid! Upon my head 1015
 The roses languish, and my hair that drips
 With ointment rises as with sudden fear, 1
 My face is wet with showers of tears that fall 1
 Unwillingly, and groans break off my song. 1
 Grief loves accustomed tears, the wretched feel 1020
 That they must weep. I would be glad to make
 Most bitter lamentation, and to wail,
 And rend this robe with Tyrian purple dyed.
 My mind gives warning of some coming grief,
 Presages future ills. The storm that smites 1025
 When all the sea is calm weighs heavily
 Upon the sailor. Fool! What grief, what storm,
 Dost thou conceive? Believe thy brother now.
 Be what it may, thou fearest now too late,
 Or causelessly. I do not wish to be 1030
 Unhappy, but vague terror smites my breast?
 No cause is evident and yet my eyes
 O'erflow with sudden tears. What can it be,
 Or grief, or fear? Or has great pleasure tears?

SCENE III

Atrous, Thyestes.

Atrous. Brother, let us together celebrate 1035
This festal day : this day it is which makes
My scepter firm, which binds the deathless pact
Of certain peace.

Thyestes. Enough of food and wine !
This only could augment my happiness,
If with my own I might enjoy my bliss. 1040

Atrous. Believe thy sons are here in thy embrace.
Here are they and shall be, no single part
Of thy loved offspring shall be lost to thee.
Ask and whate'er thou wishest I will give,
I'll satisfy the father with his sons ; 1045
Fear not, thou shalt be more than satisfied.
Now with my own thy young sons lengthen out
The joyous feast : they shall be sent for ; drink
The wine, it is an heirloom of our house.

Thyestes. I take my brother's gift. Wine shall be
poured 1050
First to our fathers' gods, then shall be drunk.
But what is this? My hands refuse to lift
The cup, its weight increases and holds down
My right hand, from my lips the wine retreats,
Around my mouth it flows and will not pass 1055
Within my lips, and from the trembling earth
The tables leap, the fire scarce gives light,
The air is heavy and the light is dim
As between day and darkness. What is this?
The arch of heaven trembles more and more, 1060
To the dense shadows ever thicker mist

Is added, night withdraws in blacker night,
 The constellations flee. Whate'er it is,
 I pray thee spare my sons, let all the storm
 Break over my vile head. Give back my sons! 1065

Atreus. Yea, I will give them back, and never more
 Shalt thou be parted from them. [Exit.]

SCENE IV

Thyestes.

What distress
 Seizes my reins? Why shake my inward parts?
 I feel a burden that will forth, my breast
 Groans with a groaning that is not my own. 1070
 Come, children, your unhappy father calls;
 Come, might I see you all this woe would flee.
 Whence come these voices?

SCENE V

Atreus, Thyestes, Slave bearing a covered charger.

Atreus. Father, spread wide thy arms, they come,
 they come.
 Dost thou indeed now recognize thy sons? 1075
 [charger is uncovered.]

Thyestes. I recognize my brother: Canst thou bear
 Such deeds, O earth? O Styx, wilt thou not break
 Thy banks and whelm in everlasting night
 Both king and kingdom, bearing them away
 By a dread path to chaos' awful void? 1080
 And, plucking down thy houses,allest thou not,
 O city of Mycenæ, to the ground?

We should already be with Tantalus!
 Earth, ope thy prisons wide on every side;
 If under Tartarus, below the place 1085
 Where dwell our kinsmen, rests a lower deep,
 Within thy bosom let a chasm yawn
 Thitherward, under all of Acheron
 Hide us; let guilty souls roam o'er our heads
 Let Phlegethon that bears its fiery sands 1090
 Down through its glowing channels, flow o'er me!
 Yet earth unmoved lies but a heavy weight,
 The gods have fled.

Atreus. Take, rather, willingly
 Those whom thou hast so long desired to see;
 Thy brother does not hinder thee. Rejoice; 1095
 Kiss them, divide thy love between the three.

Thyestes. This is thy compact? This thy brother's
 faith?
 Is this thy favor? Layst thou thus aside
 Thy hate? I do not ask to see my sons
 Unharm'd; what wickedness and deathless hate 1100
 May give, a brother asks: grant to my sons
 Burial; give them back, thou shalt behold
 Straightway their burning. Lo, I ask thee naught,
 The father will not have but lose his sons.

Atreus. Thou hast what'er remains, what'er is
 lost. 1105

Thyestes. And do they furnish food for savage birds?
 Are they destroyed by monsters, fed to beasts?

Atreus. Thyself hast banqueted upon thy sons,
 An impious feast.

Thyestes. 'Tis this that shamed the gods!
 This backward drove the daylight whence it came!
 Me miserable! What cry shall I make, 1111

What wailing? What words will suffice my woe?
 I see the severed heads, the hands cut off,
 Greedy and hungry, these I did not eat!
 I feel their flesh within my bowels move; 1115
 Prisoned, the dread thing struggles, tries to flee,
 But has no passage forth; give me the sword,
 Brother, it has already drunk my blood:
 The sword shall give a pathway to my sons.
 It is denied? Then rending blows shall sound 1120
 Upon my breast. Unhappy one, refrain
 Thy hand, oh, spare the dead! Who e'er beheld
 Such hideous crime? Not wandering tribes that dwell
 On the unkindly Caucasus' rough cliffs,
 Or fierce Procrustes, dread of Attica. 1125
 Behold, the father feasts upon his sons,
 The sons lie heavy in him—is there found
 No limit to thy base and impious deeds?
Atrous. Crime finds a limit when the crime is done,
 Not when avenged. Even this is not enough. 1130
 Into thy mouth I should have poured the blood
 Warm from the wounds; thou shouldst have drunk
 the blood
 Of living sons. My hate betrayed itself
 Through too much haste. I smote them with the sword,
 I slew them at the altar, sacrificed 1135
 A votive offering to the household gods,
 From the dead trunks I cut away the heads,
 And into tiniest pieces tore the limbs;
 Some in the boiling pot I plunged, and some
 I bade should be before a slow flame placed; 1140
 I cut the flesh from the still living limbs,
 I saw it roar upon the slender spit,
 And with my own right hand I plied the fire.

All this the father might have better done :
 All of my vengeance falls in nothingness ! 1145
 He ate his sons with impious lips indeed,
 Alas, nor he nor they knew what he did !

Thyestes. Hear, O ye seas, stayed by inconstant
 shores ;

Ye too, ye gods, wherever ye have fled,
 Hear what a deed is done ! Hear, gods of Hell, 1150
 Hear, Earth, and heavy Tartarean night
 Dark with thick cloud ! Oh, listen to my cry !
 Thine am I, Hell, thou only seest my woe,
 Thou also hast no star. I do not make
 Presumptuous prayer, naught for myself I ask— 1155
 What could be given me ? I make my prayer
 For you, my sons. Thou ruler of the heavens,
 Thou mighty king of the ethereal courts,
 Cover the universe with horrid clouds,
 Let winds contend on every side, send forth 1160
 Thy thunders everywhere ; not with light hand,
 As when thou smitest with thy lesser darts
 Innocent homes ; but as when mountains fell
 And with their threefold ruin overwhelmed
 The Giants—use such power, send forth such fires,
 Avenge the banished day, where light has fled 1166
 Fill up the darkness with thy thunderbolts.
 Each one is evil,—do not hesitate—
 Yet if not both, I sure am base ; seek me
 With triple dart, through this breast send this brand :
 If I would give my sons a funeral pyre 1171
 And burial, I must give myself to flames.
 If nothing moves the gods, if none will send
 His darts against this sinful head, let night,
 Eternal night, abide and hide the crime 1175

In everlasting shadows. If thou, Sun,
No longer shinest, I have naught to ask.

Atreus. Now in my work I glory, now indeed
I hold the victor's palm. I would have lost
My crime's reward unless thou thus wert grieved. 1180
I now believe my sons were truly mine—
Now may I trust again in a chaste bed.

Thyestes. What evil have my children done to thee?

Atreus. They were thy sons.

Thyestes. The children of their sire—

Atreus. Undoubted sons; 'tis this that makes me
glad. 1185

Thyestes. I call upon the gods who guard the right
To witness.

Atreus. Why not call upon the gods
Who guard the marriage-bed?

Thyestes. Who punishes
A crime with crime?

Atreus. I know what makes thee mourn:
Another first accomplished the grim deed, 1190
For this thou mournest; thou art not distressed
Because of thy dread feast, thou feelest grief
That thou hast not prepared such feast for me.
This mind was in thee: to provide like food
For thy unconscious brother, and to slay 1195
My children with their mother's aid. One thing
Withheld thee—thou believedst they were thine.

Thyestes. Th' avenging gods will come and punish
thee;
To them my prayers commit thee.

Atreus. To thy sons
I give thee over for thy punishment. 1200



HERCULES ON CETA

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

HERCULES.

HYLLUS.

PHILOCTETES.

DEJANIRA.

ALCMENA.

IOLE.

NURSE.

CHORUS OF ÆCHALIAN MAIDENS.

CHORUS OF ÆTOLIAN MATRONS.

SCENE: *Act I, Æchalia,*
Act II et seq., Trachina.

HERCULES ON CETA

ACT I

SCENE I

Hercules, Iole, Chorus of Æchalian Maidens.

Hercules. O father of the gods, whose thunderbolt
Both homes of Phœbus, east and west, do know,
Reign now secure, for I have brought thee peace
Wherever Nereus checks the spread of land.
There is no need to thunder, perjured kings 5
And cruel tyrants lie o'erthrown. I've slain
Whatever might have felt thy thunderbolt.
But father, why is heaven to me denied?
In all things, surely, I have worthy proved
Of Jove, my stepdame even witnesses 10
My heavenly birth. Why longer make delay?
Dost fear? Could Atlas not support the skies
If Hercules were there? Why still refuse
The star? Death sent me back to thee, all ills
That earth or sea or air or hell bring forth 15
Have yielded: through Arcadian streets no more
The lion wanders; the Stymphalian birds
Are dead; there is no stag of Mænalus;
The dying dragon sprinkled with his blood
The golden groves; the Hydra yields his life; 20
Beside the river Hebrus I destroyed

That well-known herd, with blood of slaughtered guests
Made fat ; and from Thermodon bore away
The spoils of war ; I saw the silent shades,
Nor thence returned alone. The trembling day 25
Behold black Cerberus. He saw the sun.
Busiris was before his altars slain ;
By this one hand fell Geryon, and by this
The bull, the terror of a hundred lands ;
Whatever hostile thing the earth brought forth 30
Has perished, by my right hand overcome.
If earth denies wild beasts to Juno's wrath,
Give back, I pray, a father to thy son,
Or give a constellation to the brave.
I do not ask that thou shouldst show the road, 35
If thou permit me, I will find a way ;
Or if thou fear'st lest earth conceive wild beasts,
Then speed the evil while she has and sees
Thy Hercules : who else would dare assail
Such foes, or be, in any Argive town, 40
Worthy of Juno's hate ? There is no land
That does not speak my fame, the frost-bound race
Of Scythians in the north, the men of Ind
Exposed to Phoebus' rays, the Libyans, too,
Beneath the constellation of the crab, 45
Have felt my hand ; bright Titan, thee I call
To witness, I have gone with thee where'er
Thou sheddest light—thy light could not pursue
My triumphs, for beyond the sun's bright world
I passed : day was not where my metes were set, 50
Nor nature, earth was wanting to my steps,
She first was wearied. Night assailed my eyes,
And utmost chaos. I have come again
From whence none other ever has returned.

The threats of ocean I have borne, no storms 55
 Could wreck my boat, wherever I have gone.
 The empty ether cannot now suffice
 The hatred of thy wife; earth fears to yield
 Wild beasts for me to conquer, does not give
 New monsters, none remain, and Hercules 60
 Stands in their place. How many evil things
 Have I, unarmed, destroyed. All dreadful forms
 That rose against me, I, alone, o'erthrew,
 Nor feared as babe or boy to meet wild beasts.
 The toils commanded me seemed light, no day 65
 Shone fruitless for me. Oh, how many ills
 I vanquished, when no king commanded me,—
 My valor drove me more than Juno's wrath.
 What profit to have made the race secure?
 Gods have not peace; the earth is free, but sees 70
 All things it had to fear secure in heaven,
 Juno translates the brutes: the crab, though slain,
 Moves in a burning pathway, has been made
 A Libyan constellation, ripening
 The grain; the lion to Astræa gives 75
 The flying year, he shakes his fiery mane,
 Dries up the moist south wind, dispels the clouds,
 Behold even now has each wild beast attained
 The skies, and so outstripped me. From the earth
 I still, though victor, must behold my foes. 80
 To brutes and monsters Juno gives a star
 That she may make the skies a dreaded place
 For me. Aye, let her waste the earth and make
 The heav'ns more terrible than earth or hell,
 Yet still Alcides shall be given room. 85
 If after war, if after conquered beasts
 And Stygian dog, I still am deemed unmeet

For heavenly heights, Hesperia shall touch
 Peloris, and the two lands be but one ;
 I'll put the seas to flight—or dost thou bid 90
 That they be joined? Let Isthmus no more part
 The waves, and on united seas let ships
 Be borne by new-found paths to Attica.
 Let earth be changed: the Ister flow along
 Through channels new, the Tanais find new ways. 95
 Grant, Jupiter, at least, that I may guard
 The gods; thou needst not hurl thy thunderbolt
 Where I shall be the guardian. Though thou bid
 That I protect the realms of heat and cold,
 Believe, the gods are safe in that abode. 100
 The dragon slain, Apollo merited
 A Delphian temple and a heavenly home,—
 How many Pythons in the Hydra lay!
 Bacchus and Perseus have attained the skies,
 How small a region was the east he quelled! 105
 How many monsters in the Gorgon lived?
 What son of thine, of Juno born, deserved
 A constellation by his glorious deeds?
 The realm I on my shoulders bore I seek.
 But thou, O Lichas, comrades of my toils, 110
 Herald my triumph, of the conquered home
 And fallen realm of great Eurytus tell.
 [*To his servants.*] Drive ye the victims quickly to the
 fanes
 Built to Cenæan Jove where wild with storms
 The feared Eubæan ocean hurls its waves. 115

SCENE II

Iole, Chorus of Æchalian Maidens.

Chorus. The equal of immortal gods is he
 Whose life and fortune travel hand in hand ;
 But he who slowly drags his life along
 With heavy groans, believes it worse than death.
 He who beneath his feet put eager fates, 120
 And steered the boat on the dark river's flood,
 Shall never give to chains his captive arms,
 Nor ever grace the tyrant's triumph car.
 He to whom death is easy never finds
 Life wretched : though his vessel in mid seas 125
 Desert him, when old Boreas in his might
 Drives back the south wind, or when Eurus strives
 With Zephyr, when the waters seem to part,—
 He may not gather up the broken beams
 Of his wrecked ship that, in the waters' midst, 130
 He may yet hope for land ; he cannot know
 Shipwreck, who freely can forgo his life.

Base weakness, tears, locks sordid with the dust
 Of my dear fatherland are mine, not flames
 Nor crash of fortune strike me down. O Death, 135
 Thou comest to the happy ; wretched men
 Thou fleest. Still I live ; my fatherland,
 Alas ! shall lapse to wilderness and woods,
 Its fallen temples yield to sordid huts,
 The cold Dolopian thither lead his flock 140
 Where yet Æchalia's growing ashes lie ;
 Thessalian shepherds, to the very town
 Bringing their unskilled pipes, in doleful lays
 Retell the mournful story of our times,

And ere a few more generations pass 145
 The world shall seek in vain the place where stood
 My country. Happy once, I made my home
 By no unfruitful hearth nor dwelt among
 Thessalia's barren acres ; now I go
 To Trachin, land of rocks and heavy brakes, 150
 Parched mountain summits, groves the mountain goat
 Scarce loves to haunt. But if a milder fate
 Await the slave, if Inachus' swift stream
 Shall bear him on its bosom, if he dwell
 By Dirce's fountain where the languid stream 155
 Ismenos flows, a slender thread—'twas there
 The mother of proud Hercules was wed.
 False is the fable of the double night,
 When longer in the heavens shone the stars,
 When Hesperus arose for Lucifer, 160
 And slow Diana long delayed the sun.
 What rocks or cliffs of Scythia nourished thee?
 Did Rhodope's wild mountain bring thee forth
 A Titan ; or Mount Athos' rugged steeps ;
 Or the stern mountains by the Caspian shore ? 165
 What tiger's spotted breast has suckled thee ?
 He cannot feel a wound, the spear grows dull,
 The steel is softened, shattered is the sword
 That smites his naked body, and the stones
 Fly back ; he does not fear the fates, invites 170
 With flesh unconquerable death itself ;
 Spears may not pierce him, nor the Scythian shafts
 From the tense bowstring shot, nor any dart
 The cold Sarmatians bear, nor can they wound
 Who eastward, near the Habatæans, dwell, 175
 Where arrows truer than the Cretan's fly—
 The Parthian's. With his body he o'erthrew

Æchalia's walls, against him naught can stand.
 What he prepares to conquer is o'ercome.
 His hostile face brings death, to have but seen 180
 The wrath of Hercules is woe enough.
 Could vast Briareus, or could Gyas huge,
 Who, standing on Thessalian mountains, stormed
 The skies with snake-armed hands, make him afraid?
 Beside great evils lie his great rewards, 185
 No more of ill is left, we have beheld—
 Unhappy we—great Hercules in wrath.

Iole. Me miserable! Not that temples lie
 With gods and homes o'erthrown, that in the flames
 Fathers with sons, divinities with men, 190
 The temple with the tombs, are burned to dust—
 We mourn no common woe; my tears are caused
 By other sorrows, fortune bids me weep
 For other ruins. What first shall I mourn?
 What most demands my tears? All equally! 195
 Earth hath not breasts enough to sound with blows
 Worthy these sorrows. O ye gods above,
 Make me a mournful Sipylean rock;
 Or place me by the banks of Po where sounds
 The murmur of the trees, the sisters sad 200
 Of Phaethon, or on Sicilian rocks
 Where I, a siren, may lament the fate
 Of Thessaly; or to the Thracian woods
 Bear me, where like a swallow Procne sits
 Beneath Ismavian shade and mourns her son. 205
 Give me a form fit for my bitter tears,
 And let harsh Trachin echo with my woe.
 Still Cyprian Myrrha weeps, and Ceyx' wife
 Grieves for her husband, Niobe outlives
 Herself, and Thracian Philomela flees 210

And, a sad nightingale, laments her son.
 Oh, happy, happy were I, if my home
 Might be the woods, if I, a bird, might rest
 Within my country's meadows and bemoan
 My fate with querulous murmur, and fame tell 215
 Of winged Iole. I saw, I saw
 My father's wretched fate, when smitten down
 By Hercules' death-dealing club, he lay
 Through all the courtyard scattered. If the fates
 Had given thee a tomb, where had I sought, 220
 O father, for thy members? Have I borne
 To see thy death, O Toxeus, when not yet
 Thy tender cheeks with manly beard were decked,
 Nor yet man's blood was coursing through thy veins?
 But why, my parents, should I mourn your fate 225
 Whom friendly death holds safe? My fate demands
 My tears. A captive, I am forced to drive
 The distaff and the spindle for my lord.
 Oh, cruel beauty, comeliness of form
 That brought me death! My home for this alone 230
 Fell ruined, since my father would not give
 His daughter to Alcides, feared to be
 Akin by marriage to great Hercules.
 But I must seek my mistress' proud abode.

Chorus. Why foolishly recall thy father's realm 235
 And thy sad fate? Forget thy former lot,
 He only can be happy who has learned
 To keep, as king or slave, an equal mind,
 And suffer varying fortunes. He has snatched
 The heaviness from ill, strength for himself, 240
 Who bears whate'er befalls with steadfast soul.

ACT II

SCENE I

The Nurse, alone.

What cruel raging seizes woman's heart
When one roof covers wife and concubine!
Charybdis, Scylla, in Sicilian straits,
Need less be feared ; less wild the savage beast. 245
For when the beauty of the captive shone,
And Iole was bright as cloudless day,
Or like the stars that shine in nights serene,
The wife of Hercules like one insane,
With fierce look stood. As lying with her young 250
Within a cavern in Armenia's land,
The tigress, at an enemy's approach,
Springs forth, or as the mænad, god-inspired,
When bidden wave the thyrsus, for a time
Stands doubtful whither she shall turn her steps, 255
So rages through the house of Hercules
His wife, nor does the house give room enough ;
She rushes up and down, roams to and fro,
Then pauses, in her cheeks all sorrows burn,
Naught is within her bosom hid ; swift tears 260
Follow her threats, nor does one mood endure,
Nor is she with a single phase of wrath
Contented : now her cheeks are like a flame,
Now pallor drives away the red, her grief

Takes every form, she weeps, laments, implores. 265
 The door creaks, see, with headlong steps she comes,
 Telling with words confused her inmost thoughts.

SCENE II

Dejanira, Nurse.

Dejanira. O wife of Jove, wherever thou may'st be
 Within thy airy home, send thence, I pray,
 Against Alcides such a savage beast 270
 As may suffice me. If a dragon lives
 Unconquered, vaster, with more fruitful head ;
 If any beast exists so huge and dire,
 So terrible, that Hercules himself
 Averts his eyes, let this from some vast cave 275
 Come forth ; or if wild beasts must be denied,
 I pray thee to some terror change this form—
 With this mind I can do whatever ill
 Thou wouldst. Oh, make my form express my woe !
 My bosom will not hold the wrath I feel. 280
 Why searchest thou the ends of earth ? Why turn
 The world about ? Why seek for plagues in Dis ?
 Within this bosom wilt thou find all ills
 Which need be feared, with this shaft arm thy hate ;
 I too may be a stepdame. Thou canst slay 285
 Alcides, use this hand for what thou wilt.
 Why pause ? Use me, the mad one, what new crime
 Dost thou command ? Say on, why hesitate ?
 'Tis well that thou shouldst rest, this wrath does all.

Nurse. O foster-child, a little calm thyself. 290
 Restrain thy plaints, control thy fiery rage,
 And curb thy grief, now show thyself indeed

The wife of Hercules.

Dejanira. Shall Iole,
 The captive maid, give brothers to my sons,
 The slave become the daughter of great Jove? 295
 Not in one bed can flame and torrent flow,
 The northern bear may not in ocean's blue
 Be wet—not unavenged will I remain.
 What though thy shoulders bore the sky, though earth
 Must thank thee for its peace? There yet remains 300
 A greater terror than the Hydra's rage :
 The anger of an injured wife. Burn thus
 The flames of glowing Etna? This my wrath
 Can conquer all thy conquests, shall a slave
 Seize on my marriage-bed? Till now I feared. 305
 Dread monsters, none remain, those plagues are gone,
 In place of beasts there comes the hated slave.
 By Titan, by the ruler of the gods,
 I was Alcides' wife but while he feared! 309
 The prayers I made the gods, they grant the slave,
 I was successful for the concubine !
 Ye heard my prayers, ye gods, but for her sake,
 And for her sake he came again unharmed.
 O anguish that no vengeance can assuage,
 Seek some revenge unthought, unspeakable, 315
 And dreadful, teach great Juno how to hate ;
 She knows not how to rage. For me he warred,
 For me made red the Achelous' waves
 With his own blood, he overcame the snake,
 He turned his threats against the bull, and slew 320
 A thousand foes in one. But now no more
 He finds me pleasing, and a captive maid
 Has been preferred to me—but shall not be !
 The day that ends our marriage ends his life.

Yet what is this? My courage fails, my wrath 325
 Declines, my anger ceases, wretched one,
 Why languid? Wherefore lose thy rage? Wouldst
 keep

A woman's patient constancy? What law
 Forbids add fuel to the flame? What force
 Subdues the fire? O strength of wrath, abide! 330
 Peers shall we be, I have no need of vows,
 A stepdame will be with me who will guide
 My hands aright, though she be uninvoked.

Nurse. What crime preparest thou, O heart insane?
 Wouldst slay thy husband, him whose glory spreads
 From east to west, his fame from earth to heaven?
 The land of Greece would rise 'gainst such a deed, 337
 His father's house, the whole Ætolian race
 Would grieve, and all the earth avenge his death.
 What canst thou do alone? Though thou shouldst
 think 340

T' escape the vengeance of the earth and man,
 The father of Alcides wields his bolts.
 See, see his threatening torches in the sky,
 The thunder-riven heavens! Fear death itself,
 In which thou hop'st thou yet mayst safety find. 345
 There rules the uncle of thy Hercules;
 Wherever thou wouldst turn, unhappy one,
 Thou findest there thy husband's kindred gods.

Dejanira. The crime is great, I own, but grief
 impels,

Nurse. Thou'lt die.

Dejanira. But yet the wife of Hercules. 350
 No day shall rise to find me widowed wife,
 No captive concubine enjoy my couch.
 The day shall sooner rise from out the west,

The Indian beneath the northern sky
 Shall sooner pale, and sooner Phœbus' rays 355
 Make dark the Scythian than Thessalian maids
 See me deserted ; with my blood I'll quench
 Their marriage torches. He shall die or I ;
 To savage beings slain he yet may add
 A wife, and I among his mighty deeds 360
 Be numbered. Yet in death I'll still embrace
 The couch of Hercules. Alcides' wife
 May freely pass among the shades, but goes
 Not unavenged ; should Iole conceive
 A child by Hercules, these hands of mine 365
 Shall tear it from her womb, yea through the blaze
 Of marriage torches I will seize the maid.
 What though in anger, on his wedding day,
 He make of me the victim, if I fall
 Above the lifeless form of Iole ? 370
 Who falls upon the forms of those he hates
 Dies happy.

Nurse. Why add fuel to the flame ?
 Why feed thy boundless sorrow ? Wretched one,
 Why needlessly afraid ? He chose the maid
 While yet her father reigned ; he sought in her 375
 The daughter of a king, but when the queen
 Declined into a slave, love lost its force
 And her misfortune took away her charm :
 Forbidden things are loved, what one may have
 One willingly foregoes.

Dejanira. Her lowered state 380
 Inflames a greater love ; he loves her still.
 Although she lacks a home, although her hair
 Hangs unadorned with gold or precious gems.
 Perchance his pity loves her very grief.

This is his wont, to love his captive ones. 385

Nurse. Dardanian Priam's sister, whom he loved,
He gave away; recall how many wives,
How many virgins he has loved before,
Inconstant ever. While she wove the dance
In Pallas' honor, the Arcadian maid, 390
Augeia, suffered from Alcides' lust—
She died and Hercules remembered not
His former love. Need I of others speak?

The muses have no lover, brief the flame
Which burned for them within Alcides' breast. 395
A guest upon Timolus, he caressed
The Lydian maid, and, still the slave of love,
He sat beside the wheel and lightly turned
With unaccustomed hand the moistened thread;
He laid from off his neck the lion's spoil, — 400
The Lydian fillet bound his shaggy locks
That dripped with myrrh from Saba. Everywhere
He feels the heat of love, but brief the flame.

Dejanira. A gallant ever follows wandering flames.

Nurse. Could he prefer a slave, a foeman's child, 405
To thee?

Dejanira. As when the early sunshine clothes
The grove's bare boughs, the joyous woods put forth
New buds, but when the cold north wind drives back
The south wind and harsh winter cuts away
The leaves, and one beholds the bare brown trunks,
So we in running life's long journey lose 411
Some beauty ever and less lovely grow.
That way has love departed, what in us
He loved is gone, and pain and motherhood
Have robbed me of him. Seest thou not the slave
Has not yet lost her pristine comeliness? 416

Rich ornaments indeed she lacks, and sits
 In squalor, yet her beauty shines through all,
 And time and chance have taken from her naught
 Except her kingdom. Therefore grief slays sleep.
 I was the wife most honored everywhere, 421
 And every woman looked with envious eyes
 Upon my marriage; when Argolic maids
 Made prayers for aught to any of the gods,
 I was the measure of the good they asked. 425
 What father shall I have that equals Jove?
 What husband under heaven equals mine?
 Should he who gave Alcides his commands,
 Eurystheus' self, espouse me, he is less.
 To have been severed from a prince's bed 430
 Were little; she indeed is sorely reft
 Who feels herself bereft of Hercules.

Nurse. The children oft win back the husband's
 love.

Dejanira. Her child, perchance, will draw him from
 my couch 434

Nurse. Perchance he brought her to thee for a gift.

Dejanira. The man thou seest pass among the
 towns,

Illustrious, and bearing on his back
 The tawny lion's skin, who from the proud
 Takes realms and gives them to the sore distressed,
 Who in his dread hand bears a mighty club, 440
 Whose triumphs by the farthest lands are sung,
 Are sung by all the peoples of the earth,
 Is most inconstant; nor does glory's grace
 Incite him, through the world he wanders still,
 Not as the peer of Jove, nor as the great 445
 Should pass through Argive cities, but he seeks

One he may love, would gain a virgin's bed.
 He ravishes whatever is denied,
 Against the people's anger, from their wreck,
 Procures his brides, and raging passion gains 450
 The name of courage. Famed Œchalia fell ;
 One day, one sun beheld the city safe
 And ruined, Love the only cause of war.
 As often as a father shall refuse
 To give his daughter to great Hercules, 455
 So oft he needs to fear. Who will not be
 Alcides' father is Alcides' foe,
 And if he be not made a son, he slays.
 Why keep I then my hands in innocence,
 Till, feigning madness, with his savage hands 460
 He bends his bow and slays his son and me ?
 So Hercules is wont to cast aside
 His wives, so wont to break his marriage bond.
 Nor can one count him guilty ; to the world
 Juno appears the cause of all his crimes. 465
 Why should inactive anger pause amazed ?
 Anticipate his crime—up, hands, and smite,
 While yet my wrath burns hot within my breast.
Nurse. Wouldst slay a husband ?
Dejanira. Yes, of concubines !
Nurse. The Jove-begotten ?
Dejanira. Of Alcmena's race. 470
Nurse. Not with the sword ?
Dejanira. The sword.
Nurse. But if too weak ?
Dejanira. By guile I'll kill him.
Nurse. Oh, what madness this !
Dejanira. My husband was the teacher.
Nurse. Wilt thou slay

The man whom Juno could not ?

Dejanira. Whom the gods
Most hate they render wretched, whom men hate 475
They bring to nothing.

Nurse. Spare him, wretched one,
And fear.

Dejanira. Who does not stand in fear of death
Fears nothing. I rejoice to meet his sword.

Nurse. O foster-child, thy grief is heavier
Than's meet, the fault demands an equal hate 480
Oh, why so harshly judge his light offence ?
Measure thy grieving by thy injury.

Dejanira. And is a mistress then a slight offence
Against a wife? Whatever else she bears,
This is indeed too heavy.

Nurse. Has thy love 485
For great Alcides fled ?

Dejanira. Nay, nurse, not fled
Believe, it lives deep fixed within my heart,
But angered love is anguish infinite.

Nurse. By magic arts and prayers have wives oft
bound
Their husbands. I have made the winter groves 490
Grow green, the hurtling thunderbolt stand still,
Have made the dry earth glad ; the rocks gave
place,

The gates of hell flew back, the dead stood still,
The gods infernal spoke at my command,
The dog of hell was silent, midnight saw 495
The sun, and day was overwhelmed in night,
The earth and sea, the sky and Tartarus,
Obeyed me, nothing kept its ancient seat
Before my incantations. Let us seek

To bend his will, my songs will find a way. 500

Dejanira. What plants does Pontus nourish, or
what grows

On Pindus underneath Thessalian rocks ?

Where shall I find a charm to conquer him ?

Though Luna at the magic of thy songs

Should leave the stars and hide within the earth, 505

And winter see the harvest ; though the flash

Of Jove's swift lightning pause at thy command ;

Though nature's order be reversed, and day

Should shine with many stars, he will not bend.

Nurse. Love conquers even the immortal gods. 510

Dejanira. This too, perchance, he'll conquer, gain
this spoil,

And love may be Alcides' last great task.

By the divinity of all the gods,

By this my fear, I pray thee : keep concealed

Whate'er I do in secret, hide it well. 515

Nurse. What is it thou wouldst hide ?

Dejanira. Not spears, nor swords,

Nor yet avenging fires.

Nurse. I can and will

Keep silence, if such silence be not sin.

Dejanira. I pray thee look around, lest any hear

And keep a watchful eye on every side. 520

Nurse. The place is safe from any prying one.

Dejanira. In a far corner of this realm there lies
A hidden cave that keeps our secret well.

That place sees not the sun at morning's prime

Nor yet when Titan, bringer of the light, 525

Sinks with the spent day in the crimson sea.

There lies assurance of Alcides' love,

The charm from Nessus comes, whom Nephele

Conceived by the Thessalian king and bore
Where Pindus lifts its head among the stars, 530
Where rising o'er the clouds bald Othrys stands.
For when, exposed to dread Alcides' club,
Acheloüs took lightly every form,
But, having passed through all, stood forth at last
Subdued, with broken horns and wounded head, 535
The victor Hercules to Argos went
With me, his wife. Evenus' wandering stream
Swift through the meadows to the ocean bore
Its flood of waters, its impetuous waves
Already almost reached the line of woods. 540
The centaur Nessus, used to crossing floods,
Was eager for a prize, and bearing me
Upon his back where join the horse and man,
He stemmed the swelling water's threatening waves.
Alcides still was wandering in their midst 545
Cutting the eager depths with mighty strides.
Then when he saw Alcides still afar :
'My spoil art thou,' he said, 'my wife shalt be,
The waves are passed.' Then holding me embraced,
His steps he hastened. But the waves no more 550
Detained great Hercules. 'Base ferryman,'
He said, 'though Ister and the Ganges flow
With mingled currents, I will conquer both,
My shafts will speed thy flight.' More swift his bow
Than words; the arrow, flying to the wound, 555
Transfixed the centaur, ending flight in death.
Already searching blindly for the light
He caught the poison flowing from the wound,
And in his hoof, which with his savage hand
He boldly tore away, he gave it me. 560
Then spake he dying words: 'This charm,' he said,

' Can fix a wavering lover, so the brides
 Of Thessaly were by Mycale taught—
 She was the mage at whose command the moon
 Deserted starry heaven to follow her, 565
 A garment smeared with this, this very blood,
 He said, ' give thou to fickle Hercules,
 If e'er a hated mistress should usurp
 Thy marriage rights, and he should give great Jove
 Another daughter. It must see no light, 570
 In darkness most remote lie things like this.
 So only shall this blood retain its strength.'
 Then did the sleep of death cut short his words,
 And brought his weary members long repose.
 O thou, to whom I trust, with whom I share 575
 This secret, quickly go and bring the charm,
 That, smeared upon his shining robe, its force
 May enter through his heart and limbs, and pierce
 His inmost marrow.

Nurse. Quickly I obey
 Thy will, dear foster-child ; do thou invoke 580
 With earnest prayer the god invincible
 Who shoots with youthful hand his certain shafts.

SCENE III

Dejanira, alone.

O thou whom earth and sea and heavenly powers
 Adore in fear, who shakest Etna's fires,
 I make my prayer to thee, O winged child, 585
 Feared of thy ruthless mother ; with true aim
 Make ready thy swift dart, no common shafts ;
 I pray thee, choose the keenest, which not yet

Thy hands have aimed at any, there is need
 Of such that Hercules may learn to love. 590
 With firm hand draw the bow till both horns meet,
 Shoot now the shaft that wounded once dread Jove
 When casting down his thunderbolt, the god
 Put on a horned and swelling front, and cleft
 The raging seas, and as a bull bore off 595
 The fair Assyrian maid. Oh, pierce with love,
 A love more keen than any yet have felt !
 Let Hercules learn love for me his wife.
 And if the charms of Iole should set
 The fire of love aflame within his heart, 600
 Oh, let it drink the love of me and die.
 Thou oft hast conquered thunder-bearing Jove,
 And him who in the land of shadows wields
 The dusky scepter, ruler of the Styx
 And leader of the great majority. 605
 More strong than angered stepdame, take, O god,
 This triumph—thou alone—quell Hercules.

SCENE IV

Dejanira, Nurse.

Nurse. The charm is ready, and the shining web
 That wearied all thy damsels' hands to weave.
 Smear now the poison, let Alcides' robe 610
 Drink in the blood, I'll strengthen with my prayers
 Its magic power. But see where Lichas comes,
 The charm must be concealed, nor our device
 Be known.

SCENE V

Dejanira, Nurse, Lichas.

Dejanira. In palaces of kings is rarely found 615
 A faithful servant ; faithful Lichas, take
 This garment which with my own hands I spun
 While Hercules was wandering through the world,
 Or drunk with wine was holding on his breast
 The Lydian maid, or seeking Iole. 620
 Yet peradventure, having well deserved,
 I may win back the rugged hero's heart,
 For merit often overcometh ill.
 Command my husband not to wear the robe
 Until with incense he has fed the flames, 625
 And reconciled the gods, and on wet locks
 Has bound a wreath of silver poplar leaves.
 Within the palace I will make my prayers
 To Venus, mother of unconquered love.
 Ye Calydonian women, friends who came 630
 From home with me, lament my mournful fate.

SCENE VI

Chorus of Ætolian Women.

O daughter of Oineus, thy childhood's friends,
 We weep thy hapless marriage, honored one.
 We, who with thee were wont to wade the shoals
 Of Achelous, when with passing spring 635
 Its swollen waters ebbed, and with slow sweep
 Its slender current wound, and when no more
 The yellow waters of Lycormas rolled,

A headlong, turgid river ; we were wont
 To seek Minerva's altars, and to join 640
 The virgin chorus ; we with thee were wont
 To bear the holy emblems treasured up
 Within the Theban ark, when winter's cold
 Had passed, and thrice the sun called summer forth,
 When the grain-giver Ceres' sacred seat 645
 Eleusis shut the priest within her shrines.
 Whatever fate thou fearest, let us still
 Remain the faithful sharers of thy lot.
 When happier fortune smiles, fidelity
 Is rare. Though all the people throng thy courts, 650
 Though hundreds cross thy threshold, though thou pass
 Surrounded by a crowd of followers,
 Yet hardly shalt thou find among them all
 One faithful friend ; the dread Erinnyes hold
 The gilded portals, and when great men's gates 655
 Are opened fraud and craft and treachery
 And lurking murder enter, and abroad
 Thou goest among the people companied
 By envy. Oft as morning drives out night,
 Believe, so often is a monarch born. 660
 Few serve the king and not his kingly power,
 The glory of the court is dear to most :
 One seeks to be the nearest to the king
 And pass illustrious through the city streets ;
 And one with glory's lust is burnt, and one 665
 Would sate his thirst with gold—nor all the tracts
 Of Ister, rich in gems, suffice his greed,
 Nor Lydia quench his thirst, nor all the land
 Where Zephyr sighs and golden Tagus flows ;
 Nor were the Hebrus his, flowed through his fields
 The rich *Hydaspes*, if the Ganges' flood 671

Within his borders ran ; the world itself
 Is all too small to serve the covetous.
 Kings and kings' palaces one cultivates,
 Not that to drive the plough with bended back 675
 The ploughmen never cease, or thousands till
 The fields—he only longs for heaped-up wealth.
 One serves the king that he may trample all,
 May ruin many and may strengthen none ;
 He longs for power but to use it ill. 680
 How few death finds at fulness of their fame ;
 Whom Cynthia beholds in happiness,
 The new-born day sees wretched ; rare it is
 To grow old happy. Softer is the sod
 Than Tyrian robe and brings a fearless sleep, 685
 But golden roofs disturb repose, and kings
 Must lengthen out the watches of the night.
 Oh, if the rich man's heart were visible,
 How many fears fair fortune stirs within !
 The Bruttian waters, tossed by northwest winds, 690
 Are port more peaceful. With untroubled heart
 The poor may rest, his cup and plate, indeed,
 Are only birchwood, but with fearless hand
 He holds them ; easily his simple food
 Is gathered, and he fears no waiting sword : 695
 In cup of gold the drink is mixed with blood.
 The wife who weds a man of humble means
 May wear no costly necklace nor be decked
 With Red Sea's gift, nor carry in her ears
 The choicest gems of eastern waves, nor wear 700
 Soft wool twice dipped in rich Sidonian dyes,
 Nor with Mæonian needle broider it—
 The Seres, dwelling near the rising sun,
 To eastward, made the needle from the trees.

What though with common plants she dye the web
 Her unskilled hands have woven, she enjoys 706
 Untroubled marriage. Whom the people praise
 The dread Erinnys follows with her scourge,
 And poverty itself is scarcely glad
 Until it sees the fortunate o'erthrown. 710
 The man who will not keep the middle course
 Ne'er finds his pathway safe. When once he sought
 To drive his father's car and bring the day,
 The boy kept not the wonted road, but found
 With wandering wheel a way among the stars 715
 Unknown to flaming Phœbus—in his fall
 The world was ruined. While he ploughed through
 heaven

A middle course, bold Dædalus steered safe
 Through peaceful climes, nor gave the sea a name,
 But Icarus despised his father's flight 720
 And dared to fly beyond the birds themselves,
 Close to the sun. He gave an unknown sea
 His name. Great deeds are recompensed by ill.
 Be others known as fortunate and great,
 But let no crowd hail me as powerful, 725
 Let no great gale compel my slender ships
 To sail broad seas, small boats should keep near shore;
 Misfortune passes by the quiet ports
 And seeks the ships that ride the deep, whose sails
 Knock at the clouds. But why with pallid face, 730
 Like mænad drunk with Bacchus, stands the queen?
 Speak, wretched one, what grief does Fortune's wheel
 Roll round for thee? Though thou refuse to speak
 Thy face would tell the sorrows thou wouldst hide.

ACT III

SCENE I

Dejanira, Nurse, Chorus.

Dejanira. A trembling shakes my terror-smitten
limbs, 735

My hair with horror stands erect, and fear
Benumbs the soul till now so madly tossed ;
Aghast and terrified, my heart leaps up,
With throbbing veins my liver palpitates ;
As when the storm-blown sea still tosses high, 740
Although the day has calmed and languid airs
Breathe softly, so my mind that hitherto
Has swelled with fear is still with dread oppressed ;
When once god turns against the fortunate
Misfortune follows fast. Such end awaits 745
Performance of great deeds.

Nurse. What cruel fate
Turns now the wheel for thee, O wretched one ?

Dejanira. When I had smeared the robe with
Nessus' blood
And sent it, and had sadly turned to seek
My chamber, sudden fear, I know not why, 750
Assailed me—fear of fraud. I'll test the charm.
Fierce Nessus bade me keep the charmed blood
From flame or sun, this artifice itself
Foreboded treachery. Undimmed by cloud,

The glowing sun was ushering in bright day ; 755
 Fear hardly yet permits me speak ! I cast
 Within the fiery beams of Titan's light
 The blood with which the palla had been wet,
 The vestments smeared. The blood I threw away
 Quivered, and, hardly yet by Phœbus' beams 760
 Made warm, blazed up. I scarce can tell the tale !
 As Eurus or warm Notus melts the snow
 That slips from sparkling Mimas in the spring ;
 As the Leucadian headland breaks the waves
 That roll against it from the Ionian sea, 765
 And all the wearied surf breaks into foam ;
 Or as the bitter incense melts away
 Upon the glowing altar of the gods,
 So all the wool was withered and destroyed,
 And while I wondered, that which gave me cause 770
 For wonder vanished, but the earth was moved
 Like foam, and everything the poison touched
 Shrank into nothingness. But swift of foot
 And terrified, I see my son approach.

SCENE II

Hyllus, Dejanira, Nurse, Chorus.

Dejanira. What tidings dost thou bring me ?
 Speak, I pray. 775

Hyllus. Fly, fly, if any hiding-place remains
 On earth, or sea, or ocean, in the skies
 Or Hades, mother, fly beyond the hand
 Of Hercules.

Dejanira. 'Tis what my soul presaged !

Hyllus. Oh, seek the realm of the victorious one, 780

Seek Juno's shrine, this still is free to thee,
All sanctuaries else are snatched away.

Dejanira. Oh, speak, what fate awaits me innocent?

Hyllus. That glory of the earth, the only guard
The fates have given to a stricken world 785
In place of Jove himself, is gone; there burns
Within the trunk and limbs of Hercules
Some plague, I know not what. Who ruled the beasts,
That victor now is conquered, moans, laments.
What further wouldst thou ask?

Dejanira. The wretched seek
To know their misery; speak, what the fate 791
That presses on our home? O household gods!
Unhappy household gods! I am indeed
Now widowed, exiled, overwhelmed by fate!

Hyllus. Thou weepst not alone for Hercules, 795
The world must mourn him with thee, do not deem,
O mother, that the grief is thine alone;
Already all the race lifts up its voice.
Lo, all the world laments with heavy grief
The man thou mournest; thou but sufferest 800
A sorrow that the whole earth shares with thee,
Thou mourn'st Alcides first, O wretched one,
But not alone.

Dejanira. Yet tell me, tell, I pray,
How near to death lies now my Hercules.

Hyllus. Death, whom in his own realm he con-
quered once, 805
Flies from him, nor dares fate permit the wrong.
Dread Clotho throws aside the threads, perchance,
And fears to end the fates of Hercules.
O fatal day! O day calamitous!
Shall great Alcides see no other day? 810

Dejanira. What? Dost thou say that he has gone
before

To death, the shadow realm, the dark abode?
May I not be the first to die? Oh, speak,
If he not yet has fall'n.

Hyllus. Eubœa's land,
That swells with mighty headlands, on all sides 815
Is beaten by the sea; the Hellespont
Smites Cephæus; this side the south wind blows,
But there Aquilo's snowy storm-winds threat,
Euripus turns the restless, wandering tides
That seven times roll up and seven times 820
Drop back ere Titan in the ocean's flood
Merges his weary head. Upon the isle,
High on a cliff which many clouds surround,
An ancient temple of Cenzæan Jove
Shines forth. When on the altars he had placed 825
The votive offering and all the grove
Was filled with lowing of the gilded bulls,
He threw aside his tawny lion's skin
All foul with putrid gore, laid down his club
And freed his shoulder from the quiver's weight, 830
Then shining in thy robe, his shaggy locks
With silver poplar bound, he lit the fire
Upon the altar. 'Take,' he said, 'this gift,
O father, let thy sacred fires shine bright
With plenteous incense, which from Saba's trees 835
The Arabs, wealthy servants of the sun,
Collect. The earth,' he said, 'the sky, the sea,
Are all at peace; all savage beasts subdued,
And I have come a victor. Lay aside
Thy thunderbolt.' But even as he prayed, 840
He groaned, and wondering at himself fell prone.

A horrid clamor filled the air, such noise
 As when the bull attempts to fly the wound
 Inflicted by the two-edged ax, and feels
 The sting of steel, and with his mighty roar 845
 Fills all the holy place ; or, as Jove's bolt
 From heaven thunders, so this groaning rolled
 Skyward and seaward ; Chalcis heard the sound,
 It woke the echoes of the Cyclades,
 The crags of Cephæus and all the groves 850
 Gave back Alcides' voice. I saw him weep ;
 The people thought him mad as once he was ;
 His servants fled ; he turned with fiery glance
 And sought for one alone among them all—
 Sought Lichas. He with trembling fingers grasped
 The altars, died of fear, and left small room 856
 For vengeance. With his hand the hero grasped
 The quivering corpse. ' By this hand, this,' he cried,
 ' O fates, have I at last been overcome ?
 Has Lichas conquered Hercules ? Behold 860
 Another conquest : Lichas overwhelmed
 By Hercules. My deeds grow poor and mean.
 Be this my latest labor.' ' Mid the stars
 He flung him, sprinkled with his blood the clouds.
 So flies the Getic arrow from the bow 865
 Toward heaven, so the Cretan archer shoots
 His shaft, but not so far the arrow flies.
 The head was shattered on the cliffs, the trunk
 Fell into ocean, there they both abide.
 ' Stay, madness has not seized my mind,' he said, 870
 ' This ill is worse than madness or than wrath,
 I rage against myself.' He spoke and raged.
 He rent apart his joints, with cruel hand
He tore his giant limbs and wounded them ;

He sought in vain to pluck away the robe. 875
 In this alone I saw Alcides fail,
 Yet striving still to tear it off he tore
 His limbs themselves, the robe had grown a part
 Of Hercules' dread body, with the flesh
 The garment mingled, nor could one detect 880
 The dread disaster's cause, though cause there is.
 Now hardly able to endure his pain,
 Wearied he lies and presses with his face
 The earth, then longs for ocean, his distress
 The waves soothe not ; he seeks the sounding shore
 And leaps into the deep, his servants' hands 886
 Hold back the wandering one. O bitter fate !
 We were the equal of great Hercules !
 Now to Eubœa's shore a vessel bears
 The hero back, a gentle south wind wafts 890
 Alcides' giant weight ; life leaves his limbs,
 Night sits upon his eyes.

Dejanira.

Why faint, my soul ?

Why art thou so amazed ? The crime is done.
 Can Jove demand again his son of thee,
 Or Juno ask her rival ? To the world 895
 Thou must atone, render then what thou canst.
 The sword shall smite me. Thus it shall be done.
 Suits such light punishment such heavy guilt ?
 O father, with thy thunderbolts destroy
 Thy sinful child, nor let thy hand be armed 900
 With common weapons. Send that thunderbolt
 With which, had not Alcides been thy son,
 Thou wouldst have burned the Hydra : as a scourge
 Destroy me, as an evil dreaded more
 Than angry stepdame. Such a bolt send forth 905
 As once at wandering Phaethon was hurled.

I ruined, in Alcides, all the world.
 Why ask a weapon of the gods? Now spare
 Thy son, O Jove; the wife of Hercules
 Should be ashamed to beg for death, this hand 910
 Shall give the gift I ask for. Seize the sword:
 Yet why a sword? Whatever drags to death
 Is sword sufficient. From some soaring cliff
 I'll cast me down. This $\text{\textcircled{E}}$ ta will I choose,
 This $\text{\textcircled{E}}$ ta where first shines the newborn day; 915
 From this I'll fling myself, the rugged rocks
 Shall cut me into pieces, every stone
 Shall take a part of me, my wounded hands
 Shall hang upon them, all the mountain side
 Be crimsoned with my blood. A single death 920
 Is nothing.—Nothing? Can I make it more?
 Canst thou not choose the weapon, O my soul,
 On which to fall? Oh, might Alcides' sword
 Become my couch! 'Twere well to die on this.
 Is it enough that by my own right hand 925
 I die? Assemble nations of the earth,
 Hurl rocks and flaming brands, let no hand fail,
 So have I found at last my punishment.
 Already cruel kings bear rule unchecked;
 Now unrestrained, are savage monsters born; 930
 Again the accustomed altars seek to take
 A brother's blood for sacrificial gift.
 My hand has opened up a path for crime,
 Has snatched away the punisher of kings,
 Of tyrants, beasts, and monsters, 'gainst the gods 935
 I set myself. O wife of thundering Jove,
 Dost stay thy hand? Why spare thy lightning's shaft,
 Nor imitate thy brother, sending forth
 The thunder snatched from Jove? Why slay me not?

From thee great glory, honor infinite, 940
I snatched, O Juno, in thy rival slain.

Hyllus. Why wouldst thou overthrow a tottering
house ?

If crime is here it is of error sprung ;
And he who sins unwittingly scarce sins.

Dejanira. Who would remit his fate and spare him-
self 945

Deserves to err. 'Tis well that I should die.

Hyllus. Who longs for death seems guilty.

Dejanira. Death alone

Makes guiltless those deceived.

Hyllus. From Titan's beams

First fleeing—

Dejanira. Titan flees, himself, from me, 949

Hyllus. Wouldst part with life ?

Dejanira. Alcides would I seek.

Hyllus. He breathes, he yet takes in the vital air.

Dejanira. When Hercules was conquered, he was
dead !

Hyllus. Wouldst leave thy son ? Thyself cut short
thy life ?

Dejanira. She livestoo long whose son must bury her.

Hyllus. Follow thy husband.

Dejanira. Ah, the faithful wife

Is wont to go before.

Hyllus. Unhappy one, 956

If thou condemn thyself, thou seemst indeed

To prove thyself the guilty.

Dejanira. He who sins

May not himself annul the punishment.

Hyllus. The life of many a one is spared whose sin
Was done in error, not by his own hand. 961

Who blames his lot ?

Dejanira. Whoever draws a lot
Unfavoring.

Hyllus. The man, forsooth, whose darts
Pierced Megara, whose fiercely raging hand
Sent the Lernæan shaft that slew his sons, 965
Though thrice a murderer, yet forgives himself.
In Cinyphs' stream, beneath the Libyan skies,
He bathed his hands and washed away his guilt.
Oh, whither art thou driven, wretched one ?
Why blame thy hands ?

Dejanira. The conquered Hercules 970
Himself condemns them—one should punish crime.

Hyllus. If I have known Alcides, he will be
Again the victor ; treachery, o'erwhelmed,
Will bow before thy Hercules.

Dejanira. His joints
Are wasted by the Hydra's venom'd gore, 975
The poison eats my husband's giant limbs.

Hyllus. Thou deemst the poison of the strangled
snake

Can slay the one who took its evil life ?
He killed the dragon, though its teeth were fixed
Within his flesh ; and, though his limbs were wet 980
With flowing venom, as a victor stood.
Can Nessus' blood destroy the one who slew
Dread Nessus' self ?

Dejanira. In vain wouldst thou detain
One doomed to die. The sentence has gone forth
That I must leave the light, enough of life 985
Has he who meets his death with Hercules.

Nurse. By these white hairs, I ask thee ; by this
breast

That like a mother's nourished thee, I pray,
 Put by thy wounded spirit's heavy threats ;
 Thrust out the fearful thoughts of dreaded death. 990

Dejanira. He who persuades the wretched not to die
 Is cruel ; death is sometimes punishment,
 But, oft a blessing, has to many brought
 Forgiveness.

Nurse. Yet unhappy one, restrain
 Thy hand, that he may know the crime to be 995
 Not thine, but error's.

Dejanira. There I'm free indeed !
 I think the gods infernal will absolve.
 I am by my own self condemned ; these hands
 Let Pluto purge. Forgetful, by thy banks,
 O Lethe, let me stand, a mournful shade, 1000
 Receive my husband ! Whosoe'er was bold
 For crime, his sin was less than my mistake :
 Not Juno's self had dared to snatch from earth
 Great Hercules. Some worthy penalty
 Prepare ; let Sisyphus desert his stone 1005
 And let my shoulders roll its heavy weight.
 Me let the wandering waters fly, my thirst
 The faithless waves delude ; I have deserved
 That thou shouldst roll me round, O flying wheel
 Whereon the king of Thessaly is racked. 1010
 Let eager vultures on my entrails feed ;
 One child of Danaus there lacks—the tale
 Of fifty I will fill ; O Theban wife,
 Take me as thy companion, with worse crime
 Than thine this hand is stained, though thou didst slay
 Thy children and thy brothers ; take thy child, 1016
 Mother Althea, take thy child indeed !
Yet no such deed was thine ! Ye faithful wives,

Who in the sacred woodland stretches dwell,
 Shut me from fields Elysian. If one there 1020
 Has sprinkled with her husband's blood her hands,
 Unmindful of chaste marriage torch has stood,
 A bloody child of Belus, with drawn sword,
 She as her own will know me, praise my deed ;
 That company of wives I well may join ; 1025
 But they, too, shun my hands so basely stained.
 O husband, strong, invincible, my soul
 Is innocent, my hands alone are stained.
 O mind too credulous ! O Nessus false
 And of half beastly guile ! A concubine 1030
 I sought to ruin, but destroyed myself !
 Bright Titan, life, that flattering still dost hold
 The wretched in the light of day, depart !
 Where Hercules is not the light is vile.
 I will discharge the penalty for thee, 1035
 Will give my life. Shall I prolong that life
 Till at thy hand, O husband, I meet death ?
 Hast any strength ? Can thy right hand make tense
 The bowstring for the sending of the shaft ?
 Or do the weapons fall, thy languid hands 1040
 No longer draw the bow ? O husband brave,
 If thou art able still to slay, I wait
 Thy hand, I wait for death ; as thou didst dash
 In pieces guiltless Lichas, slay me now,
 In other cities scatter me, in worlds 1045
 To thee unknown ; that monstrous things may cease
 In Arcady, destroy me. Yet from those
 Thou didst return, O husband !

Hyllus.

Mother cease.

Excuse thy deed, an error is not crime.

Dejanira. If filial piety be truly thine,

1050

O Hyllus, smite thy mother. Wherefore now
 Trembles thy hand? Why turn away thy face?
 This crime were filial piety indeed.
 O dastard, dost thou hesitate? This hand
 Snatched from thee Hercules, destroyed the one 1055
 Who gave thee for a grandsire thundering Jove;
 I snatched from thee a glory far more great
 Than e'er I gave thee when I gave thee light.
 If crime is new to thee, then learn of me,
 Hew with the sword my throat, let iron pierce 1060
 The womb that bore thee, an intrepid soul
 Thy mother gave thee. Such deed were not crime
 For thee; by my will, though by thy right hand,
 I die. Dost fear, O son of Hercules?
 Wilt thou not, like thy father, crush out ill, 1065
 Perform great deeds? Prepare thy good right hand!
 Behold a bosom full of misery
 Lies bared: strike, I proclaim thee free from crime:
 The dread Eumenides themselves will spare,
 I hear their scourges singing. Who is that 1070
 Whose viperous locks upon her forehead writhe,
 Who brandishes her sword and shakes her wings?
 Why dost thou follow me with flaming torch,
 Megæra? Dost demand the vengeance due
 For Hercules? I give it. Awful one, 1075
 Have hell's dread arbiters judged yet my cause?
 Behold I see the dreadful prison doors.
 What aged one is he who strives to lift
 The giant rock upon his wounded back?
 Behold already does the conquered stone 1080
 Roll back! Whose members tremble on the wheel?
 Lo, pallid, dread Tisiphone appears,
 She *charges murder*; spare thy blows, I pray!

Megæra, spare! Thy Stygian torches stay!
 The crime was caused by love. But what is this?
 Earth shakes, the smitten roofs crack, whence these
 threats? 1086

The whole world falls upon me, everywhere
 The nations groan, the universe demands
 Its great defender. O ye cities spare!
 Ah, whither can I fly? In death alone 1090
 I find a harbor for my shipwrecked soul.
 I call to witness shining Phœbus' wheel
 Of flame, the heavenly ones to witness call:
 I die and leave great Hercules on earth.

Hyllus. Ah me, she flies amazed; the mother's part
 Is finished, she resolved to die, my part 1096
 Remains—to snatch her from the shock of death.
 O pitiable filial piety!

If I should stay my mother's death, my crime
 Is great against my father; yet I sin 1100
 Against my mother, suffering her death;
 Crime presses either way, yet she must be
 Prevented—I must snatch her from this crime.

SCENE III

Chorus.

What Orpheus sang, Calliope's blest son,
 When 'neath the heights of Thracian Rhodope 1105
 He struck his lute Pierian, is true:
 Nothing abides. The rushing waterfall
 Silenced its thunder at his music's sound,
 The waters ceased their flow, forgot their haste,
 And while the rivers thus delayed their course, 1110

The far-off Thracian thought the Hebrus failed.
 The woodland brought the winged kind, they came
 Resting within the groves, or if a wing
 That, roaming, flew through upper air the while,
 Was wanting, when it heard the song it dropped. 1115
 Mount Athos tore away its crags and came,
 Bearing the Centaurs as it moved along,
 And stood by Rhodope; its snowy crown
 Was melted by the song; the dryad fled
 Her oak and hasted to the prophet's side; 1120
 The wild beasts at thy singing with their dens
 Drew near; the Afric lion sat beside
 The fearless flock, nor did the timid does
 Tremble before the wolves; the serpent came
 From gloomy den, its poisoned sting forgot. 1125
 Nay more, he passed the gates of Tænarus
 Among the silent manes, bearing there
 His mournful lute, and with his doleful song
 He overcame the melancholy gods
 Of Erebus, nor feared the Stygian lake 1130
 By which the gods make oath; the restless wheel
 Stood still, its languid whirling forced to cease;
 The heart of Tityus began to grow
 The while the vultures listened to the song;
 Thou also heardst, O oarsman, and thy boat 1135
 Came oarless over the infernal stream;
 Then first the aged Phrygian forgot
 His raging thirst although the waves stood still,
 Nor did he stretch a hand to reach the fruit.
 When Orpheus seeking thus the lower world 1140
 Poured forth his singing and the restless stone
 Was conquered, following the prophet's song,
 The *Goddesses* restored the severed thread

Of fair Eurydice. But Orpheus looked
 Behind, forgetful or not deeming true 1145
 Restored Eurydice was following him.
 He lost the song's reward, she died again
 Who hardly had been given back to life.
 Then seeking comfort in his song, he sang
 These words to Getan folk in mournful strains : 1150
 Unchanging laws are given by the gods,
 And he who rules the seasons ordereth
 Four fleeting changes for the changing year.
 Dead Hercules compels us to believe
 The Thracian Seer. The Parcæ tie again 1155
 The thread of life for none, however much
 He may desire ; all that has been born
 Or shall be dies. When to the world shall come
 The time when law is not, the southern sky
 Shall bury Libya, and on Afric's sands 1160
 Shall fallen lie ; the northern sky o'erwhelm
 Whatever lies beneath the poles, whate'er
 Cold Boreas smites ; pale Titan blot the day
 From heaven ; the royal palace of the sky
 In its own ruin drag the rising sun 1165
 And setting ; death and chaos overtake
 The gods ; death find at last within itself
 Its end. What place will then receive the world ?
 Shall Tartarus spread wide her doors to take 1169
 The shattered heavens ? Or is there space enough
 Between the earth and heaven—perchance too much ?
 What place can hold such crime ? A single place
 Will hold the three realms—earth, and sea, and sky.
 But what great clangor moves the wondering air ?
 It is the sounding voice of Hercules. 1175

ACT IV

SCENE I

Hercules, Chorus.

Hercules. Bright Titan, turn again thy wearied
steeds,
Send night, let perish to the world that day
Whereon I fell, let black cloud shadow day,
So thwart my stepdame. Father, now command
Black chaos to return ; their union rent, 1180
The poles should here and there be torn apart ;
Why spare the stars ? O father, thou hast left
Thy Hercules ! Scan well on every side
The sky, O Jove, lest any Gyas hurl
Thessalian crags, and Othrys' weight be made 1185
Too light for great Enceladus. The gates
Of Hell's black prison now are opened wide
By haughty Pluto, and his father's chains
Are broken—to the sky he leads him back.
That son who stood in place of thy dread torch 1190
And thunder, as avenger of the world,
Returns to Styx ; and fierce Enceladus
Shall rise and hurl against the gods the weight
With which he now is held to earth. My death
Shall make thy heavenly throne, O father, shake. 1195
Before the giants make thy heavens their spoil,
Beneath the ruins of the universe,

O father, bury me in whom thou lovest
The firmament itself.

Chorus. Not empty are thy threats, O son of Jove.
Now on Thessalian Ossa Pelion stands, 1201
And Athos piled on Pindus lifts its groves
Amid the starry ether, Typhoeus thence
Shall overcome the cliffs and raise on high
From out the Tuscan sea Inarime. 1205
Enceladus, by lightning not yet slain
Shall rend his chimneys in the mountain side
And lift aloft great Etna. Even now
The realm of heaven is in thee destroyed.

Hercules. I, I, who conquered death and scorned
the Styx 1210
And came again through stagnant Lethe's midst,
With spoil at sight of which bright Titan shrank
And from his fleeing horses almost fell ;
Yes, I, whose power the gods' three realms have felt,
I die although no sword has pierced my side, 1215
Although Mount Othrys did not bring my death,
Although no giant form with fierce wide jaws
Has overwhelmed me with all Pindus' ridge.
I fell without a foe and worst of all—
O wretched valor!—Hercules' last day 1220
Shall see no monster prostrate! Woe is me,
I lost my life, but not in noble deeds!
O judge of earth, ye gods who oft have seen
My labors, and thou earth, is it your will
To smite your Hercules with death? O shame 1225
Unmatched! O bitter fate! A woman's hand
To be the author of Alcides' death!
If fate unchanging willed my fate should be
By woman's hand, if such base threads run out

My last of life, ah me, why might I not 1230
 By Juno's hatred fall? By woman's hand
 I should have fallen, but by one divine.
 If this had been too much to ask, ye gods,
 An Amazon brought forth 'neath Scythian skies
 Might well have vanquished me. What woman's hand
 Could conquer me, great Juno's foe? Ah, worse 1236
 Thy shame in this, my stepdame! Wherefore call
 This day a glad one? What has earth brought forth
 To satisfy thy wrath? A woman's hate,
 A mortal's, was more powerful than thine. 1240
 Till now thou hadst to tolerate the shame
 Of finding thou wast not Alcides' peer,
 Now thou art by two mortals overcome,
 The gods should be ashamed of such revenge!
 Would the Nemæan lion with my blood 1245
 Had satisfied his thirst, or I, brought low,
 Surrounded by the hundred-headed snake,
 Had trembled; would that I, had been the prey
 Of Nessus, or that I might wretched sit
 Forever on an everlasting rock 1250
 Conquered among the shades. Fate stood amazed,
 While I dragged forth my latest prey and came
 From Stygian depths again to light, and broke
 The chains of Dis: Death fled me everywhere
 That I might lack in death a glorious fate. 1255
 O monsters, conquered monsters! Not the dog
 Of hell, at sight of day, has dragged me back
 To Styx, not underneath the western sky
 Has the Iberian Geryon's savage rout
 O'ercome me, not twin dragons; woe is me, 1260
 How often have I lost a noble death!
 What *fame shall be my last?*

Chorus. Dost see how courage, conscious of itself,
 Shrinks not at Lethe's stream? He does not grieve
 At death, but feels ashamed before its cause, 1265
 He fain would end his final day of life
 Beneath some swelling giant's mighty form,
 Of mountain-bearing Titan feel the weight,
 Or owe his death to ravening wild beast.
 O wretched one, thy hand itself the cause 1270
 Why no wild beast or savage monster lives;
 What worthy author of Alcides' death
 Remains, unless it be thy own right hand?

Hercules. Alas, what scorpion within my breast,
 What cancer from the burning plains turned back
 And fixed within my bosom, burns my reins? 1276
 My lungs once full of swelling blood are dry,
 With burning venom is my heart aflame,
 Slow fever dries my blood. The pest first eats
 My skin, thence makes an entrance to my limbs; 1280
 The poison takes away my sides, it gnaws
 My joints and ribs, my very marrow wastes;
 Within my empty bones the venom stays,
 The bones themselves may not for long endure,
 Torn from the ruptured joints the mighty mass 1285
 To ruin falls, my giant body fails,
 The limbs of Hercules are not enough
 To satisfy the pest. How great the ill
 That I own great. O dreadful infamy!
 Behold, ye cities, see what now remains, 1290
 See what remains of that great Hercules!
 O father, dost thou recognize thy son?
 Did these arms hold to earth the conquered neck
 Of the dread lion? Did the mighty bow,
 By this hand strung, bring down Stymphalian birds

From out the very stars? Did I o'ertake 1296
 With steps of mine the fleet-foot stag that bore
 The branching gold upon his radiant front?
 Did Calpe, dashed to pieces by these hands,
 Let out the sea? By these hands overcome, 1300
 Lie low so many beasts, so many crimes,
 So many kings? Sat once the dome of heaven
 Upon these shoulders? Is this body mine?
 This neck? Have I against a falling sky
 Stretched forth these hands? Or was the Stygian
 dog 1305
 Dragged by my hand beyond the river Styx?
 What sepulcher contains my early strength?
 Why call I Jove my father? Why through him
 Claim I, unhappy one, my right to heaven?
 Already is Amphitryon deemed my sire. 1310
 Whatever venom lurks within my veins,
 Come forth! Why seek me with a secret wound?
 Wast thou within the Scythian sea brought forth,
 Beneath the frozen sky? Was Tethys slow,
 Or Spanish Calpe on the Moorish shore 1315
 Thy author? O dread ill, didst thou come forth
 As serpent lifting up thy crested head?
 Or something evil, yet unknown to me?
 Wast thou from blood of the Lernæan snake
 Produced, or wast thou left upon the earth 1320
 By Stygian dog? Thou art all ills and none.
 What face is thine? Grant me at least to know
 By what I die; whatever evil thing
 Or savage beast thou art, fight openly.
 Who makes for thee a place within my bones? 1325
 Lo, from my mangled flesh my hand draws forth
 My entrails; deeper yet the way is found

Within the seat of life. O malady,
 Alcides' peer! Whence come these bitter groans?
 Whence come these tears I feel upon my cheeks?
 My eyes unconquerable once, nor wont 1331
 To show a tear before my enemies,
 At last have learned to weep. O bitter shame!
 What day, what land e'er saw Alcides' tears?
 How many evils have I borne dry-eyed, 1335
 To thee alone what courage yields which slew
 So many monsters, thou alone, thou first,
 Hast made me weep! More hard than frowning rock,
 Or Chalybean steel, or wandering isles,
 The stern Symplegades, thy might has crushed 1340
 My power, has forced my eyes at last to weep.
 O mighty ruler of the skies, the earth
 Beholds me weeping, groaning, worst of all,
 My stepdame sees me. Ah, once more it burns
 My fibers; lo, the fever glows again. 1345
 Where now is found for me a thunderbolt?

Chorus. What cannot suffering conquer? Once
 more firm

Than Getic Hæmus, than Parrhasian skies
 Not milder, to the bitter pain he yields;
 He bows his wearied head upon his breast, 1350
 From side to side he moves his ponderous weight,
 His valor often overcomes his tears.
 So with however warm a beam he shine;
 Titan can never melt the arctic snows;
 The radiance of the ice outshines the torch 1355
 Of blazing Phœbus.

Hercules. Father, turn thy face
 To my complaint, Alcides ne'er before
 Asked aid; not when the fruitful Hydra wound

Its fold about my limbs ; between hell's lakes
Where black night reigns I stood with death, nor
sought 1360

Thy aid ; dread monsters, tyrants, kings, I slew,
Nor skyward turned my face. This hand of mine
Was still my pledge, for me no thunderbolt
E'er flashed from out Jove's heaven. This day
compels

A prayer from me ; it is the first, last time 1365
That he shall hear me pray : one thunderbolt
I ask, one only, but a giant one.

I might have stormed the heavens, but since I deemed
Thou wert my father, I have spared the skies.

O father, whether thou art merciful 1370

Or cruel, to thy son stretch forth thy hand,
Speed now his death and give thyself this fame.

Or if it grieve thee, and thy hand refuse

To do the deed, from the Sicilian peak

Send for the Titans, bearing in their hands 1375

Mount Pindus, or let Ossa with its weight

O'erwhelm me ; burst the doors of Erebus

And let Bellona with drawn sword attack :

Send forth fierce, rushing Mars, against me arm

That terrible swift one ; he is indeed 1380

My brother, yet my stepdame Juno's son.

Thou too, Athena, by one parent born

The sister of Alcides, hurl thy spear

Against thy brother ; supplicating hands

I stretch toward thee, my stepdame, hurl at length

A dart, I pray, against me, I would still 1386

By woman's hand be slain ; already calmed,

Already satisfied, why nourish wrath,

Why seek for further vengeance ? Suppliant here

Thou seest Hercules ; no savage beast, 1390
 No land, e'er saw me praying thus to thee.
 Now that I need indeed a stepdame's wrath,
 Now, does thy anger cease? Dost put aside
 Thy hatred? Since I wish for death, thou sparest.
 O earth, O cities of the earth, does none 1395
 Yield torch or weapon now for Hercules?
 Ye rob me of my arms? When I am gone
 May no land bring forth monsters wild, the world
 Long never for my hand if evil rise,
 Or hate be born. Cast at my hapless head 1400
 Great stones, and end at last my misery.
 O world ungrateful, dost thou now desert?
 Hast thou forgot? Thou wouldst have been the
 prey
 Of beasts and monsters hadst thou not borne me.
 Ye nations, now snatch hence the rescuer ; 1405
 This time is given you to recompense
 My benefits, death be their great reward.

SCENE II

Hercules, Alcmena.

Alcmena. Where shall Alcides' wretched mother
 go?
 Where seek her son? If sure my sight, lo, there
 With throbbing heart he lies and passion-tossed. 1410
 He groans, 'tis finished. Let me, O my son,
 For the last time embrace thee, let me take
 Thy fleeting breath. Receive my last embrace.
 But where are now thy limbs? where now that neck
 That bore the firmament with all its stars? 1415

Who is it leaves to thee so small a part
Of all thy powers ?

Hercules. O mother, thou indeed
Dost look on Hercules, but on his shade.
O mother, recognize thy son. Why weep,
With eyes turned from me? Wherefore veil thy
face? 1420

Dost blush that Hercules is called thy son ?

Alcmena. What land brought forth this new
calamity ?

What fearful thing has triumphed over thee ?

Who is the conqueror of great Hercules ?

Hercules. Thou seest Alcides slain by woman's
guile. 1425

Alcmena. What guile is great enough to conquer
him ?

Hercules. A woman's anger, mother, is enough,

Alcmena. Whence flowed the poison in thy bones
and joints ?

Hercules. Her venom found its way through
poisoned robe.

Alcmena. But where the robe? I see thy naked
limbs. 1430

Hercules. With me it is consumed.

Alcmena. Can such things be ?

Hercules. Mother, the Hydra and a thousand beasts
Invade my vitals. What flame like to these
Divides Sicilian skies or Lemnos' isles,
Or heaven's burning plain whose fiery zone 1435
Forbids the day to move? Oh, cast me, friends,
Into the channel or the river's midst.
The Ister is not deep enough for me,
Nor mighty ocean's self could quench my flames ;

All water fails me, every stream dries up. 1440
 Why didst thou send me back again to Jove,
 O lord of Erebus? 'Twas right to keep.
 Give back thy darkness, show to conquered hell
 Alcides ; nothing will I carry thence,
 Why be afraid again of Hercules ? 1445
 Death, fear not, come ; now Hercules can die.

Alcmena. Restrain thy tears ; at least control thy
 woe,

Be still invincible before such ills.

As thou art wont, smite death and conquer hell.

Hercules. If rugged Caucasus should offer me,
 Bound by his chains, a feast for eager birds, 1451
 In Scythia that echoes with their cries,
 No lamentations would be heard from me ;
 Or if the wandering Symplegades
 Returning crush me 'midst their cliffs, I'd wait 1455
 Unmoved their threatened ruin. Should the weight
 Of Pindus lie upon me, Hæmus too,
 And Athos, where the Thracian seas break high,
 And Mimas smitten by Jove's thunderbolts ;
 My mother, should this universe itself 1460
 Fall on me, and above my body blaze
 The burning wheel of Phœbus' flaming car,
 Ignoble clamor should not overcome
 Alcides' courage. Should a thousand beasts
 Attack and tear me—here Stymphalian birds 1465
 With clangor wild fly at me from the air,
 And there the threatening bull with all his force ;
 All monsters that have been ! Or should the groves
 Rise everywhere, and cruel Sinis hurl
 His mighty limbs against me, scattering me, 1470
I still were silent ; savage beasts, nor crimes,

Nor aught that I could meet in open fight
 Could force from me a groan.

Alcmena. Perchance, my son,
 No woman's poison scorches now thy limbs,
 But all thy heavy tasks, thy labors long, 1475
 Now make thee tremble with some dread disease.

Hercules. Where is the sickness, where? Does
 any ill
 Exist upon the earth with me till now?
 Let it come hither, hand me now a bow. 1479
 These naked hands suffice. Come on! Come on!

Alcmena. Ah me, his overwhelming pain destroys
 His senses. Take away his darts, I pray,
 Snatch hence his murderous arrows, I beseech.
 His cheeks suffused with fire threat dreadful crime.
 What place of hiding can I, aged one, 1485
 Seek out? This rage is madness. Hercules
 Alone can rule himself. Why, foolish one,
 Seek flight or hiding? By a hero's hand
 Alcmena merits death; so let me die,
 E'er anything ignoble bids me fall, 1490
 E'er evil hands may triumph over me.
 But see, by troubles weakened, pain binds up
 His wearied limbs with sleep, his bosom heaves
 With heavy sighs. Be merciful, ye gods!
 If ye refuse me my illustrious son, 1495
 At least preserve its savior to the world.
 Drive out his bitter pain, let Hercules
 Renew his ancient strength.

SCENE III

Hercules, Hyllus, Alcmena.

Hyllus. O cruel light! O day so full of crime!
 The thunderer's daughter dies, his son lies low, 1500
 The grandchild only lives. He lost his life,
 Slain by my mother's hand, by treachery
 Was she deceived. Alas, what man grown old
 Through all the changes of the years has known
 In all his life such sorrows? One day snatched 1505
 Both parents from me. But of other ills
 I will not speak: great Hercules is dead.

Alcmena. Be silent, noble son of Hercules,
 Grandson of sad Alcmena—for perchance
 Long sleep will overcome Alcides' ills. 1510
 But see, repose deserts his wearied mind,
 He is recalled to sickness, I to grief.

Hercules. What see I? Trachin with its rugged
 cliffs?
 Or, placed among the stars, have I at length
 Escaped mortality? Who opens heaven? 1515
 I see thee, father; thee behold I too,
 My stepdame, reconciled. What heavenly sound
 Strikes on my ear? Great Juno calls me son.
 I see bright heaven's shining realm, I see
 The sun's encircling road with Phœbus' car. 1520
 But what is this? Who closes heaven to me?
 Who drives me from the stars? But now I felt
 The breath of Phœbus' car, almost I stood
 In heaven itself. 'Tis Trachin that I see,
 Who brings me back to earth? I see night's couch,
 The shadows call me hither. Only now 1526

Mount Ceta stood below me ; all the world
 Was spread beneath. How happily, O pain,
 Thou wast forgot ! Thou forcest me to speak,
 Oh, spare me ! take away this voice from me ! 1530
 This gift, this benefit, thy mother gave,
 O Hyllus. Would that with my lifted club
 I might have beaten out her wicked life,
 As once beside the snowy Caucasus
 I tamed the Amazon. O Megara, 1535
 Much loved, wast thou my wife when I was mad ?
 Give back my bow and club ; my hand is stained,
 I will with glory wipe away the spot,
 And Hercules' last toil shall by his wife
 Be given.

Hyllus. Father, curb thy wrathful threats ; 1540
 'Tis finished, she has suffered, she has paid
 The penalty thou fain wouldst from her claim.
 Dead lies my mother, by her own hand dead.

Hercules. Thou, trouble, still abidest at my side ;
 She by the hand of wrathful Hercules 1545
 Deserved to perish, Lichas is bereft
 Of fitting comrade ; wrath compels me rage
 Against her lifeless body. Why should that
 Escape my vengeance ? Let the wild beasts take
 Their food.

Hyllus. She suffered most, thou wouldst have wished
 Somewhat to lighten that her load of woe ; 1551
 Grieving for thee, she died by her own hand.
 A heavier penalty than thou wouldst ask,
 She suffered. But thou liest overcome
 Not by the baseness of thy cruel wife, 1555
 Not by my mother's treachery ; thy pain
 Was heaped on thee by Nessus whom thy shaft

Deprived of life ; the robe was dipped in blood
Of that half beast, half man, and Nessus now
Demands revenge.

Hercules. He has it, 'tis complete. 1560
My life is finished, this day is my last,
The prophet oak foretold this fate to me,
And the Parnassian grot that with its groans
Shook the Cirrhean temple: 'Thou shalt fall,
Alcides, conquered by the hand of one 1565
Whom thou hast conquered ; this shall come to pass
When earth and sea and hell are overcome.'
I make no plaint, 'twas right this end be given
Lest any one should live to boast himself
Alcides' conqueror. Now comes at length 1570
A noble death, of great and wide renown,
And worthy me. This day shall I see feared.
Let all the woods be cut, let Cæta's groves
Be dragged together that a mighty pyre
Receive me ; but before I come to die, 1575
Thou, Pœan's son, perform for me, dear youth,
The melancholy office, let the day
Be set ablaze with the Herculean flames.
To thee, I make, O Hyllus, my last prayer :
There is, within, a noble captive maid, 1580
She bears her kingly lineage in her face,
The virgin Iole, Eurytis' child ;
Receive her for thy bride. I, stained with blood,
Victorious, bore her from her home and land.
To the unhappy maid I've given naught 1585
But Hercules, and he is snatched away.
Jove's grandchild she shall wed, Alcides' son,
And find a recompense for all her woes.
Whatever seed she has conceived by me

To thee she shall bring forth. O mother dear, 1590
 Forbear thy grief, Alcides lives for thee.
 My courage makes thy rival to be deemed
 A stepdame ; either certainly is known
 The night on which Alcides was begot,
 Or else my father was a mortal man. 1595
 Yet though, perchance, my lineage be feigned,
 I have deserved such noble parentage,
 My glorious deeds brought honor to the skies,
 My mother to Jove's glory brought me forth.
 And if my father, though great Jove himself, 1600
 Rejoices in his fatherhood, restrain
 Thy tears, O mother, proudest shalt thou be
 Among Argolic mothers ; no such son
 Has she who wields the scepter of the skies,
 Great Juno, wife of thundering Jove, brought forth ;
 She envied mortal though the heaven was hers, 1606
 She longed to call great Hercules her son.
 Now Titan, thou must run alone thy course,
 I who have been thy comrade everywhere
 Seek now the manes and Tartarean shades ; 1610
 Yet to the depths of hell I bear this fame :
 No evil slew Alcides openly,
 Alcides conquered openly all ill.

SCENE IV

Chorus.

O radiant Titan, glory of the world,
 At whose first shining wearied Hecate leaves 1615
 Her night-dark car, say to the Sabean lands
 That lie *beneath thy* dawning, say to Spain

That lies beneath thy setting, say to all
 That suffer underneath the Greater Bear,
 Or palpitate beneath the burning wheel : 1630
 Alcides hastes to everlasting shades
 And to the kingdom of the sleepless dog
 Whence he has once returned. Let clouds surround
 Thy brightness, look upon the mourning lands
 With pallid face and veil thy head with mists ; 1635
 When, where, beneath what sky, mayst thou behold
 Another Hercules? Whose hand shall earth
 Invoke, if e'er in Lerna should arise
 A hundred-headed Hydra scattering bane,
 Or any Erymanthian boar disturb 1640
 The quiet of Arcadia's ancient race ;
 Or any child of Thracian Rhodope,
 More harsh than snowy Helice, make wet
 With human blood its stables? Who will give
 Peace to a timorous people if the gods 1635
 Be angry and command new monsters rise?
 Like other mortals now he lies whom earth
 Produced the equal of the Thunderer.
 Let all the world reëcho sounds of woe;
 Your bare arms beat, ye women, let your hair 1640
 Fall loose ; and let the temples of the gods
 Shut fast their portals, open not their gates
 But for my fearless stepdame ; to the shores
 Of Styx and Lethe goest thou, from whence
 No keel shall bring thee back ; unhappy one, 1645
 Thyself a shade, thou goest with fleshless arms,
 Pale face, and drooping shoulders, to the shades
 From whence thou camest once victorious,
 When thou hadst conquered death. Nor thee alone
Shall that ship bear. Yet not with common shades,

With the twin Cretan kings and Æacus 1651
Shalt thou be judge of men, smite tyrants down.
Spare, O ye mighty ones, refrain your hands ;
'Tis great indeed to keep your swords unstained,
And while you reign to keep the realm in peace. 1655
But valor has a place among the stars.
Wilt thou thy seat to northward find, be placed
Where Titan carries fervid heat? Wilt shine
Within the mild west whence thou mayest hear
Calpe reëcho with the sounding waves? 1660
Where in the heavens serene wilt thou be set?
What place will be secure among the stars
When Hercules has come? O father, grant,
A seat from the dread lion far removed
And from the burning cancer, lest the stars 1665
Should tremble at thy coming and forsake
Their ancient laws, and Titan be afraid.
While flowers blossom with the spring's warm days,
While winter cuts the foliage from the groves,
Or warmth calls back the foliage to the groves ; 1670
While with the flying autumn falls the fruit,
No flight of time shall snatch thee from the world :
Thou shalt be mate to Phœbus and the stars.
Sooner shall cornfields flourish in the deep,
The straits shall sooner whisper with soft waves, 1675
The constellation of the icy bear
Shall sooner leave the heavens and enjoy
Forbidden seas than nations shall forget
To sing thy praises. Father of the world,
We wretched ones entreat thee, let no beasts 1680
Be born, no monsters, nor the troubled world
Fear cruel leaders, let us not be ruled
By any court that deems the dignity

Of empire lies in ever-threatening sword.
If any monster rise again on earth, 1685
We seek a savior for the orphaned world.
Ah, hear! heaven thunders, does his father mourn
Alcides? Is the cry the voice of gods,
Or timid stepdame? Does great Juno flee
At sight of Hercules? Or 'neath his load 1690
Does Atlas tremble? Are the dreaded shades
Now shaken by the sight of Hercules?
Or does the hell-hound rend away his chains
And fly in fear that face? We are deceived,
Behold with joyous look comes Pœan's son 1695
Alcides' follower; on his shoulder clangs
The well-known shafts and quiver.

ACT V

SCENE I

Philoctetes, Nurse, Chorus.

Nurse. Tell, youth, I pray, the fate of Hercules,
Say with what mien Alcides met his death.

Philoctetes. With such a mien as no one e'er met
life. 1700

Chorus. So gladly did he mount his funeral pyre?

Philoctetes. He showed that flames are naught, what
is there left

On earth which Hercules has not o'ercome?

Lo, all is conquered.

Chorus. 'Midst the flames what place
For mighty deeds?

Philoctetes. One evil in the world 1705
He had not yet o'ercome, but he has ruled
The fire, this also to the savage beasts
He adds, among the tasks of Hercules
Shall fire be placed.

Chorus. I pray thee, now unfold
The way in which the flames were overcome. 1710

Philoctetes. Each sorrowing hand cut Cæta's forests
down,
The beech-tree lost its wealth of shade, and lay
Hewn from its base; one strong hand felled the pine
Whose top reached heaven, and called it from the
clouds,

Falling it moved the rocks and with it bore 1715
 The lesser trees. An oak with spreading top,
 Like that which whispers in Chaonia,
 Shut out the sun and stretched on either side
 Its boughs ; the great tree, pierced by many wounds,
 Cried out and broke the wedges, the dulled steel 1720
 Recoiled, the ax was injured, nor was found
 Inflexible enough ; but, stirred at length,
 The oak bore ruin with it in its fall,
 And everywhere the place admits the sun.
 The birds are driven from their resting-place 1725
 And eddying through the sunlight where the grove
 Has fallen, querulous, on wearied wing
 They seek their homes. Already every tree
 Resounds, the sacred oak-trees even feel
 The hand that holds the dreaded ax, the grove 1730
 Is no avail to save the holy place.
 The forest forms a mound, alternate beams
 Raise to the skies a pyre all too small
 For Hercules. The pine and hardy oak
 And shorter ilex carry up the flames, 1735
 And poplars wont to ornament the brow
 Of Hercules fill up the funeral pyre.
 As roars a mighty lion lying sick
 In Afric forests, he is borne along ;
 Who will believe him carried to the flames ? 1740
 His glance was seeking for the stars, not fires.
 As Cæta's soil he pressed and with his glance
 Scanned all the pyre, mounting upon the beams
 He broke them. For his bow he asked, then said :
 'Take this, O son of Pœas, take the gift 1745
 Of Hercules ; the Hydra felt these shafts,
 By these were slain the foul Stymphalian birds,

And every evil that from far I slew.
 O youth, be happily victorious,
 Nor ever send without avail these shafts 1750
 Against a foe. Or, shouldst thou wish to bring
 The birds from out the clouds, let birds descend,
 Let slaughter always follow thy sure shaft,
 Nor ever let this bow thy right hand fail ;
 Well has it learned to free the shaft and give 1755
 A sure direction to the arrow's flight,
 Sent from the string the dart shall never fail
 To find the way. I pray thee, bring the fire,
 And light for me the funeral torch. This club,'
 He said, ' which never hand but mine shall bear, 1760
 Shall burn with me ; this mighty weapon go
 With Hercules. This too thou mightest have,'
 He said, ' if thou couldst wield it ; it may aid
 Its master's funeral pyre.' And then he asked
 That with him might be burned the shaggy spoil 1765
 Of the Nemæan lion ; with the spoil
 The pyre was hid. The throng about him groaned,
 And sorrow filled the eyes of all with tears.
 His mother, raging with her grief, laid bare
 Her ample bosom, even to the womb, 1770
 And smote with heavy blows her naked breasts,
 And, moving with her cries the gods themselves
 And Jove, with woman's shrieks the place she filled.
 'O mother, thou mak'st base Alcides' death,
 Restrain thy tears, and let thy woman's grief 1775
 Turn inward. Why shall Juno know one day
 Of joy because thou weapest ? She is glad
 To see her rival's tears. Thy feeble heart
 Control, O mother, it is sin that thou
 Shouldst tear *the womb* and breast that nourished me.'

Then roaring mightily, as when he led 1781
 The dreaded hell-hound through Argolic streets,
 What time he came again from conquered Dis
 And trembling death, a victor over hell,
 Upon his funeral pyre he laid him down. 1785
 What conqueror at his triumph ever stood
 So joyous in his car? What tyrant prince
 With such a glance e'er gave the nations laws?
 How calmly did he bear his fate! Our tears
 Were dried, our sorrow, smitten, fell away; 1790
 None raised lament for him who was to die.
 'Twere shame to weep. Although sex bade her mourn,
 Alcmena stood with cheeks unwet with tears,
 A mother almost equal to her son.

Chorus. And did he, on the point of death, lift up
 To heaven no invocation to the gods, 1796
 Nor look toward Jove in prayer?

Philoctetes. Secure he lay
 And, scanning heaven with his eyes, he sought
 The part from whence his father should look down.
 Then stretching forth his hand he said; 'That one
 For whom the night was joined to night, and day 1801
 Deferred, is father to me. Whencesoe'er,
 O father, thou dost look upon thy son,
 Since either mete of Phœbus, and the race
 Of Scythians, and every burning strand 1805
 Where glows the day now praise me; since the earth
 Has peace, no lands cry out, and none pollute
 The altars, since no evil thing remains,
 I pray thee, take this spirit to the stars.
 Not death, nor hell, nor mournful realm of Dis 1810
 Could fright me; but to be a shade and pass
 To those divinities that I o'ercame,

O father, makes me blush. Divide the clouds,
 Lay wide the day that eyes of gods may see
 Alcides burning. Thou canst close to him 1815
 The stars and heaven : vainly would one seek
 To force thy will, O father, but if grief
 May lift one prayer, then ope the Stygian lake
 And give me back to death ; but prove me first
 Thy son, let this day make it evident 1820
 That I am worthy of the stars. All deeds
 Till now are poor, this day shall bring to light
 Alcides, or reject him.' Having said,
 He asked for fire. 'Up, friend of Hercules,'
 He said, 'be swift, snatch the Ætæan torch. 1825
 Why trembles thy right hand ? What, timorous one,
 Dost shrink before the dreaded infamy ?
 Give back the quiver, coward, slow, and weak !
 That hand bend bow of mine ? Why pales thy cheek ?
 With face and courage such as thou dost see 1830
 Alcides wear, apply the torch ; base one,
 Consider him who is about to die.
 Lo, now my father calls, he opens heaven.
 I come!' His face was changed ; with trembling hand
 I placed the glowing torch, the flames fled back, 1835
 The torches shrank away and shunned his limbs,
 But Hercules pursued the flying flames.
 Thou wouldst have thought that Athos, Caucasus,
 Or Pindus was ablaze ; no groan was heard,
 But loudly roared the flames. O iron heart ! 1840
 Huge Typhon placed upon that funeral pyre
 Had groaned, and fierce Enceladus himself
 Who tore from earth and on his shoulders bore
 Mount Ossa. But from out the hot flames' midst
 He rose half burned and mangled, gazed unawed. 1845

' Now, mother, thou dost show thyself indeed
 Alcides' parent,' said he, ' thus to stand
 Beside his pyre ; 'tis meet to mourn him thus.'
 Amid the smoke and threatening flame he stood
 Unmoved and steadfast, shrinking not, but bright,
 And spoke encouraging and warning words. 1851
 To every ministrant he gave new strength,
 You would have thought himself informed the blaze.
 The people stood amazed and hardly deemed
 The flames were flames indeed, so calm his front, 1855
 Such majesty was his. He did not seek
 To speed his burning, but when he believed
 Sufficient fortitude in death was shown,
 Into the hottest blaze he dragged the beams
 That seemed the least afire, and where the flame 1860
 Was brightest there the fearless hero stood.
 He veiled his face with flames, his heavy beard
 Was bright with fire, the threatening blaze leaped up
 And shone about his head ; Alcmena groaned
 And tore her loosened hair. 1865

SCENE II

Philoctetes, Alcmena, Chorus.

Alcmena. Ye gods, stand now in awe of death! So few
 Alcides' ashes, to this little dust
 Has shrunk that giant! Ah, how great a one
 Has fallen, Titan, into nothingness!
 Ah me, this aged bosom shall receive 1870
 Alcides, here his tomb. Lo, Hercules
 Scarce fills his urn, how light for me the weight
 Of him who lightly bore the vault of heaven.

O son, to that far realm and Tartarus
 Once hast thou journeyed and returned from thence ;
 Wilt thou perchance again from Styx return ? 1876
 Not that again with spoil thou mayst return,
 And Theseus owe again the light to thee,
 But yet, perchance, alone ? Can all the world
 Placed o'er thy shades suffice to hold thee down ? 1880
 Or Cerberus be able to constrain ?
 Wilt thou smite down the gates of Tænarus ?
 Within what portals shall thy mother pass ?
 Which way shall death be found ? Thou goest now
 To Hades, never more to come again. 1885
 Why waste the day in tears ? Why, wretched life,
 Dost thou still bide with me ? Why wish for light ?
 Can I bear Jove another Hercules ?
 Or will Alcmena by another son
 Like him be mother called ? O happy, thou, 1890
 My Theban husband, thou didst enter in
 The realm of Tartarus while still thy son
 Was flourishing ; perchance the gods of hell
 Fear'd when thou camest, since, though not indeed
 Alcides' father, thou wast known as such. 1895
 What country can I seek in this my age—
 I, whom harsh tyrants hate (if any such
 Still live) ? Me miserable ! If a son
 Laments a father, let him seek revenge
 On me. Let all attack me ; if a child 1900
 Of wild Busiris or Antæus lives
 And terrifies the tropic zone, I stand
 A ready prey ; if any seek revenge
 For cruel Diomedes' Thracian herd,
 Upon my members let the dread flock feed. 1905
 Perchance an angered Juno seeks revenge.

All cause for wrath is gone, secure at last,
 She shall be free from conquered Hercules.
 Her rival yet remains. I cannot pay
 The penalty she seeks. My mighty son 1910
 Has made his mother terrible. What place
 Is left? What land, what kingdom, or what zone
 In all the universe will dare defend,
 Or to what hiding can a mother go
 Who is through thee so famed? Shall I seek out
 My land and fallen home? Eurystheus rules 1916
 In Argos. Shall I seek the Theban realm?
 Ismenus' stream? The couch where chosen once
 I once saw Jove? Oh, happy had I felt
 Jove's bolt! Oh, would Alcides had been torn 1920
 Untimely from my womb! Now comes the hour
 To see my son Jove's son through glory gained.
 Would that this too were given: to know what fate
 Might snatch me hence. O son, what nation lives
 That thinks on thee? ungrateful every race! 1925
 Shall I seek Cleon? The Arcadian realm?
 The lands ennobled by thy glorious deeds?
 There fell the serpent, there the savage birds,
 There fell the cruel king, there was o'ercome
 By thee the lion which, since thou art dead, 1930
 Now dwells in heaven. If earth had gratitude,
 All would defend Alcmena for thy sake.
 Shall I repair to Thrace and Hebrus' shores?
 Those lands were also by thy merits saved,
 The stables and the realm were overcome, 1935
 The cruel king is prostrate, peace is there.
 What land indeed enjoys not peace through thee?
 Where shall I, old, unhappy, seek a tomb?
 All worlds contended for thy funeral pyre,

What people, or what temple, or what race 1940

Seek now the ashes of great Hercules?

Who asks, who wishes this, Alcmena's load?

What sepulcher, O son, suffices thee?

What tomb? This whole round world to which thy
fame

Shall give thee title! Why afraid, my soul? 1945

Thou hast Alcides' ashes, hast his bones.

Thy aid, thy all-sufficing aid, shall be

His ashes, and his death make kings afraid.

Philoctetes. O mother of illustrious Hercules,
Although thy sorrow for thy son is due, 1950

Restrain thy tears; he must not be bewailed,

Nor deeply mourned, whose valor banished death;

His valor is eternal and forbids

That Hercules be mourned.

Alcmena. My savior lost,
Shall I, his mother, cease to mourn for him? 1955

Philoctetes. Thou dost not mourn alone, the earth
and sea,

And every place where purple day looks down

On either ocean from her shining car

Mourns too.

Alcmena. O wretched mother! In one son
How many have I lost! I lacked a realm, 1960

Yet might have given one. I had no prayer,

I only of all mothers earth brought forth;

I asked the gods for nothing while my son

Still lived. What was there that Alcides' zeal

Could not bestow? What god could aught deny?

In that hand lay fulfilment of each wish; 1966

Whatever Jove refused Alcides gave.

What mortal mother e'er bore such a child?

One mother was transformed to stone who stood
 Cut off from all her offspring and bewailed 1970
 Twice seven children. To how great a band
 My son was equal ! Until now there lacked
 A great example of sad motherhood :
 Alcmena gives it. Mothers, mourn no more,
 Although persistent grief till now compelled 1975
 Your tears ; though heavy sorrow turn to stone,
 Give place to my misfortunes. Up, sad hand,
 Smite now the aged breast ! Canst thou enough,
 Thou humbled, aged woman, mourn his loss.
 Whom all the world laments ? Yet beat thy breast,
 Although thy arms are weary. Though the gods 1981
 Be jealous of thy mourning, call the race
 To mourn with thee.
 Go smite your bosoms for Alcmena's son
 And Jove's ; for his conception one day died 1985
 And Eos was delayed for two long nights.
 One greater than the light itself has died.
 All nations, smite your breasts ; your tyrants harsh
 He forced to penetrate the Stygian realm
 And put aside the dripping sword ; mourn now 1990
 His merits, let the whole world cry aloud.
 Blue Crete, dear land of Thundering Jove, lament
 Alcides, let thy hundred people mourn.
 Curetes, Corybantes, in your hands
 Clash now Idæan weapons, it is right 1995
 To mourn him thus ; now beat your breasts indeed,
 For Hercules is dead ; he is not less,
 O Crete, than is thy Thunderer himself.
 Weep ye Alcides' death, Arcadian race,
 A race ere Dian's birth. Reëcho blows, 2000
 Parrhasian and Nemæan mountain tops,

Let Menala give back the heavy sound.
 The bristles scattered on your field demand
 Groans for the great Alcides, and the birds
 Whose feathers veiled the day, whom his shaft slew.
 Argolic peoples weep ; Cleonæ, weep— 2006
 There once my son's right hand the lion slew
 That terrified your city. Beat your breasts,
 Bistonian matrons, let cold Hebrus' stream
 Give back the sound, lament for Hercules ; 2010
 Your children are no longer born to feed
 The bloody stables, on your flesh no more
 Shall feast the savage herd. Weep, all ye lands
 From fierce Antæus freed, the region snatched
 From cruel Geryon. Beat with me your breasts, 2015
 Ye wretched nations, let the blows be heard
 By either Tethys. Weep Alcides' death,
 O company divine of heaven's swift vault ;
 My Hercules upon his shoulders bore
 Your sky, O gods, when from his load set free 2020
 The giant Atlas, who was wont to bear
 Olympus and its shining stars, had rest.
 Where now, O Jove, thy lofty seat, where now
 Thy promised dwelling in the skies? Alas !
 Alcides as a mortal died ; alas, 2025
 As mortal is consumed. How oft he spared
 Thy fires, how oft he spared thy thunderbolt !
 Ah, deem me Semele and hurl at me
 Thy torch! Hast thou, O son, already found
 The fields Elysian whither nature calls 2030
 The nations? Or does black Styx close the way,
 Because of captured Cerberus, and fate
 Detain thee at the outer gate of Dis?
 What tumult now possesses all the shades?

Flees now the boatman with receding skiff? 2035
 Through all the wondering realm of death flees now
 Thessalia's Centaur? Does the Hydra fear
 And hide its serpents underneath the waves?
 Do all thy labors fear thee, O my son?
 Ah, no; I am deceived, am mad, I rave; 2040
 Nor shades nor manes fear thee, thy left arm
 No longer bears th' Argolic lion's spoil,
 The fearful pelt with all its tawny mane,
 Nor do the wild beast's teeth entrench thy brows;
 Thy quiver is another's and thy shafts 2045
 A weaker hand lets fly; unarmed thou goest,
 O son, through Hades, never to return.

SCENE III

Hercules, Philoctetes, Alcmena, Chorus.

Hercules. I hold a seat within the heavenly realm,
 Why with thy mourning dost thou bid me feel
 Once more the pang of death? I pray thee, spare!
 Already had my valor made a way 2051
 Up to the stars, yes, to the very gods.

Alcmena. Whence, whence the sound that strikes
 our startled ear?
 Whence comes the sound forbids my tears? I know
 That Chaos is o'ercome. Dost thou return, 2055
 O son, again from Styx? Not once alone
 Is cruel death subdued? Hast thou again
 Been conqueror over death, and Charon's boat,
 And hell's sad pools? Does languid Acheron
 Afford a passage and permit return 2060
 To thee alone? Nor even after death

The fates constrain thee? Or does Pluto close
 For thee the way, and tremble for his throne?
 I surely saw thee on the blazing woods,
 When raged the giant flames against the sky, 2065
 Why does the far abode no longer hold
 Thy shade? Why do the manes feel dread fear?
 Art thou a shade too terrible for Dis?

Hercules. The fear of dark Cocytus held me not,
 The dread boat has not borne my shade across; 2070
 Forbear thy mourning, mother; once indeed
 I saw the land of death, whate'er of man
 I may have had was purged away by fire,
 The part my father gave is borne to heaven;
 Thy part was given to the flames. Weep not 2075
 As one who weeps a deedless son, 'tis meet
 To mourn th' unworthy; valor starward tends,
 But fear toward death. O mother, from the stars
 Alcides speaks. To thee the cruel king,
 Eurystheus, soon shall pay due penalty; 2080
 Borne in thy car thou shalt lift up proud head.
 'Tis meet that I should seek celestial climes,
 Alcides once again has conquered hell.

Alcmena. Stay, but a moment stay! He's passed
 from sight,
 He has departed, he is starward borne. 2085
 Am I deceived, or do I dream I saw
 My son? My sad heart is incredulous.
 Thou art a god, the heavens evermore
 Shall hold thee; in thy triumph I believe.
 The Theban realm I'll seek and there will sing 2090
 The glory of the new divinity.

Chorus. Never shall glorious valor be borne down
 To Stygian shades, the brave forever live,

Nor shall the cruel fates through Lethe's stream
E'er drag them ; but when comes the final hour 2095
Of life's last day, then glory shall lay wide
The pathway to the gods. Be present still,
Thou mighty victor over savage beasts,
Thou who hast given peace to all the world ;
Now from whatever place, behold our land, 2100
And if a monster with new face should shake
The world with terror, with thy three-forked bolts
Break him in pieces, hurl thy lightning shafts
More boldly than thy father Jove himself.



OCTAVIA



DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

NERO.

SENECA.

PREFECT OF THE PALACE.

OCTAVIA.

POPPÆA.

GHOST OF AGRIPPINA.

NURSE OF OCTAVIA.

NURSE OF POPPÆA.

MESSENGER.

CHORUS OF ROMAN WOMEN.

SCENE : Nero's Palace.

OCTAVIA

ACT I

SCENE I

Octavia.

NOW bright Aurora, shining in the heavens,
Has put the stars to flight ; with radiant beams
The sun is rising, giving back to earth
Clear day. Sore burdened by thy many griefs,
Return again to thy accustomed plaints, 5
Let them exceed the watery Halcyon's tears
And sad Pandion's winged children's cries,
Thy fortunes are than theirs more hard to bear.
O mother, primal cause of all my woe,
Ever for thee thy daughter must lament ; 10
Hear her sad cries, if in the land of shades
Thou yet mayst hear. Would Clotho's aged hand
Had cut my thread of life ere I had seen
With bitter grief thy wounds, had seen thy face
Defiled with loathsome blood. O light of day, 15
Ever to me calamitous, since then
Thou art, O light, more hated than the dark.
I must obey a cruel stepdame's laws,
Her hostile will, her glances full of hate.
That baleful fury to my marriage-bed 20
Bore Stygian torches, blotted out thy life ;

My father, whom the whole round world obeyed,
 Even beyond the ocean, before whom
 The Britains, to our leaders else unknown,
 Fled. Father, woe is me, thou liest now 25
 O'erwhelmed by thy wife's craft. Thy house, thy
 child,
 Are slaves—a tyrant's captives.

SCENE II

Octavia, Nurse.

Nurse. Whoe'er thou art who by the novelty
 And outward splendor of the treacherous court
 Art captive led, in admiration lost, 30
 Behold great Claudius' house and lineage
 Wrecked by one blow of skulking Fortune's hand.
 The world was subject to his rule, the sea
 Obeyed him long and, though unwillingly,
 Floated his vessels. Lo, the man who first 35
 Subdued the Britains, covered unknown straits
 With countless fleets, and moved 'mid barbarous tribes
 And over cruel waters all unharmed ;
 He by his wife's crime fell, she by her son's,
 Whose brother now lies dead by poison killed. 40
 Deeply the wretched wife and sister mourns,
 Nor can she hide her hate though urged by fear
 Of that harsh man—with equal hate they glow.
 Her husband (such the chaste have ever shunned)
 Burns with an impious flame. In vain I strive 45
 With love and loyalty to soothe her grief,
 My counsel is by boundless woe made naught,
 Nor can her generous spirit be controlled,

It only serves to give her grief new strength.
 Alas, how base a crime my fear foresees, 50
 May god avert it!

Octavia. Oh, my bitter fate,
 Equalled by none! Would that I might endure
 Thy woes, Electra; thou mightst weep the fall
 Of thy dead father, and mightst see the crime
 Punished by thy avenging brother's hand, 55
 A brother whom thy love had snatched from harm,
 Thy faithfulness concealed. But fear forbids
 That I should mourn my parents snatched away
 By cruel fate, forbids that I should weep
 A brother's death—in him my only hope 60
 Was found, brief solace of my crowding woes.
 Now am I left the shadow of a name
 Once great, spared but for sorrow!

Nurse. Hark, the voice
 Of my sad nursling strikes upon my ears.
 What, do thy slow feet cease to bear thee on 65
 Into the bridal chamber, aged one?

Octavia. O nurse, behold my tears, my grief's sure
 sign.

Nurse. Poor child, what day will free thee from
 thy care?

Octavia. The day that sends me to the Stygian
 shades.

Nurse. Far be the omen.

Octavia. Not thy prayers control 70
 My lot, but fate.

Nurse. A milder god will give
 A happier time. With soft compliance win
 Thy husband's love.

Octavia. Ah, sooner could I tame

The savage lion or the tiger fierce,
 Than that wild tyrant's cruel heart, he hates 75
 Those sprung of noble blood, he scorns alike
 The gods and men. He knows not how to wield
 The fortune his illustrious father gave
 By means of basest crime. And though he blush,
 Ungrateful, from his cursed mother's hands 80
 To take the empire, though he has repaid
 The gift with death, yet shall the woman bear
 Her title ever, even after death.

Nurse. Restrain the words that speak thy spirit's
 rage,

And let thy voice be silenced by thy fear. 85

Octavia. Whatever may be borne I will endure.
 Nothing but bitter death can end my woes.
 A mother slain, a father basely killed,
 Reft of my brother, sunk in misery,
 Bowed down by sorrow, by my husband's hate 90
 Oppressed, the servant of my slaves, no more
 Can I enjoy the light. With throbbing heart
 It is not death I fear but worse than death.
 Be but my death unmingled with reproach
 I would be glad to die; 'tis worse than death 95
 To look upon the tyrant's swelling pride,
 His face so terrible to wretched me,
 To feel the hated kisses of my foe.
 Since the great sorrow of my brother's death,
 Murdered so basely, scarce can I endure 100
 The author of that murder, him who holds
 My brother's kingdom and enjoys the crown.
 How oft my brother's spirit comes to me
 When, worn with weeping, slumber seals my eyes
 And holds my weary limbs: with fury's torch 105

He armed weak hands, and in his brother's face
 He waved it ; then again in fear he fled
 Into my chamber, by the foe pursued,
 And, clinging to me, through my side received 109
 The sword. Then shuddering terror broke my sleep,
 And fear and grief and misery returned.
 Besides all this that haughty concubine,
 Made glorious with the plunder of our house,
 For whom the son placed on the Stygian boat
 His mother—shipwrecked, from the ocean saved, 115
 He, harsher than the billows, with the sword
 Slew her—what hope of safety can be mine
 After such crime ? That hostile victress stands
 And threatens my marriage-bed, with hate of me
 She burns, and for adultery's recompense 120
 Asks that the husband give his true wife's head.
 O father, come from Hades bringing help
 To thy poor child who calls to thee for aid ;
 Or through the riven earth lay bare the Styx
 And swiftly bear me thither.

Nurse.

All in vain 125

Thou callest on thy father's ghost for aid.
 In vain, O wretched one ! Among the dead
 No more for any child of his he cares,
 Who could prefer a child of alien blood
 To his own son, who took his brother's child 130
 To wife—an impious marriage whence has sprung
 Full many a crime, murder, and treachery,
 Desire of rule, and thirst for noble blood.
 The son-in-law was slain, a sacrifice
 In honor of the father's marriage-bed, 135
 Lest by thy marriage he should grow too strong.
 O monstrous sin ! Falsely accused of crime,

And to a woman made a sacrifice,
 Silanus' blood pollutes the household gods.
 The enemy has entered, woe is me, 140
 The captured home! The stepdame's wiles have made
 The emperor's son his son-in-law as well ;
 A youth of base soul, capable of crime,
 For whom his mother lit the marriage torch,
 And, though thou wert unwilling, yet through fear 145
 Made thee his wife. By such success made bold,
 She dared, victorious one, to lay her hand
 Upon the sacred scepter of the world.
 Who can relate the many forms of crime,
 Base hopes, and flattering wiles whereby she sought,
 Climbing through evil deeds, to gain the throne? 151
 Then holy love withdrew with fearful feet,
 The dread Erinnyes with destroying step
 Entered the empty courts, with Stygian torch
 Defiled the sacred altars of the home, 155
 Trampled the laws of nature and of god ;
 Wife for her husband mixed the poisonous draft,
 And fell ere long a victim to her son.
 Thou also liest dead, unhappy boy,
 Ever by me to be lamented sore, 160
 Star of the world, prop of a noble house,
 Britannicus! Ah, me, thou art become
 But ashes and a shadow 'mong the shades ;
 Even the cruel stepdame wept for thee
 When on the funeral pyre thy form was laid 165
 For burning, and the mournful flame destroyed
 Thy face and form so like the winged god's.

Octavia. Let him slay also me, lest by my hand
 He fall.

Nurse. Thou wert not gifted with such strength

By nature.

Octavia. Anguish, wrath, and grief, and pain, 170
Will give the wretched strength in time of need.

Nurse. Nay, conquer by submission that hard man.

Octavia. That he may give me back a brother
slain?

Nurse. That, helpless as thou art, thou mayst
restore

Thy father's tottering palace through thy sons. 175

Octavia. The royal house must look for other sons.
The dread fates drag me to my brother's side.

Nurse. The nation's love should make thy spirit
strong.

Octavia. It comforts me, but cannot ease my pain.

Nurse. The people's power is great.

Octavia. The king's is more. 180

Nurse. He will with favor look upon his wife.

Octavia. His concubine forbids.

Nurse. She is, forsooth,

Hated of all.

Octavia. Yet to her husband dear.

Nurse. She is not yet his wife.

Octavia. She soon will be—

A mother too.

Nurse. A young man's passion burns 185
Fiercely at first, but soon it languishes ;

Not long will he be swayed by sinful love,
Which is as changing smoke to constant flame.

Ever abides the love for a chaste wife.

He who first dared to violate thy bed, 190

The slave who long possessed thy husband's heart,
Already fears—

Octavia. One placed above herself.

Nurse. Subject she is and humbled, and she builds
Memorials that testify her fear.

Her will winged Cupid ; false and fickle god, 195

Also forsake ; though she be beautiful

And proud of power, her joy will be but brief.

Such griefs the queen of heaven herself has borne :

The father of the gods and king of heaven

Took every form, the plumage of the swan 200

He wore, the horns of the Sidonian bull,

In golden showers he fell ; now in the sky

Shines Leda's constellation, Bacchus dwells

In high Olympus, in his father's home

Alcides, now become a god, enjoys 205

Hebe, nor longer Juno's anger fears,

He is her son-in-law who was her foe.

The wise obedience, jealousy suppressed,

Of the high-hearted wife has overcome ;

Juno alone, secure, all-powerful, 210

In the celestial marriage chamber holds

The Thunderer, nor by mortal beauty won

Does Jupiter desert the heavenly halls.

Thou also, earthly Juno, sister, wife

Of great Augustus, hide thy heavy grief. 215

Octavia. Sooner the raging seas shall mate with
stars,

The flood with fire, the sky with Tartarus,

Sweet light with darkness, day with dewy night,

Than mine with my sin-burdened husband's soul.

Ever I think upon my brother's death. 220

Would that the ruler of the skies would come

And smite that impious tyrant's hated head

With flames, he often with his thunderbolt

Makes the earth tremble, terrifies our souls

With sacred fires, prodigies unknown. 225
 I saw a glittering meteor in the sky,
 A comet showed in heaven its dreaded torch.
 There where forever slow Boötes drives
 In the cold north his wagon through the night.
 With the fierce leader's breath the very air 230
 Is heavy. Slaughter new the star forebodes
 To all the nations that this vile king rules.
 Typhocus whom the parent earth brought forth,
 Angered by Jupiter, was not so fierce ;
 This pest is worse, the foe of gods and men ; 235
 He from their temples drives th' immortal gods,
 The citizens he exiles from their land,
 He took his brother's life, his mother's blood
 He drank, he sees the light, enjoys his life,
 Still draws his poisonous breath ! Ah, why so oft, 240
 Mighty creator, throwest thou in vain
 Thy dart from royal hand that knows not fear ?
 Why sparest thou to slay so foul an one ?
 Would that Domitian's son, the tyrant harsh,
 Who with his loathsome yoke weighs down the earth,
 Who stains the name Augustus with his crimes, 246
 The bastard Nero, might at last endure
 The penalty of all his evil deeds.

Nurse. I own him all unmeet to wed with thee,
 But to the fates and to thy fortunes bow, 250
 O foster child, nor, I beseech thee, stir
 Thy passionate husband's rage. Some god, perhaps,
 Will come avenging, happier days will rise.

Octavia. Long since the bitter anger of the gods
 Pursued our house. First wrathful Venus filled 255
 My wretched mother's heart with sinful love,
 Married already, madly she embraced

A new, incestuous union ; of her child,
 Her husband, and the holy marriage vows
 Unmindful, serpent-girdled, with loose hair, 260
 The avenging goddess visited that couch,
 Snatched from the hellish marriage-bed the torch,
 And quenched its light in blood. With passion's heat
 The cruel emperor's bosom was inflamed
 To hideous murders. With the sword he slew 265
 My wretched mother! Me, alas, he whelmed
 In everlasting mourning by her loss,
 His wife and son he dragged away to death,
 And faithlessly betrayed our tottering house.
Nurse. Do not renew thy filial laments, 270
 Nor trouble with thy tears thy mother's soul,
 She suffered grievously for all her sin.

SCENE III

Chorus of Roman Women.

What tale is this we hear? Would it were false,
 And might lose credit, told in vain, though oft.
 May no new wife to our chief's chamber pass, 275
 And may his bride, the child of Claudius, keep
 Her place within his home, and bear him sons,
 Pledges of peace which an untroubled world
 May long enjoy ; may Rome forever know
 Her ancient glory. Juno was and is 280
 Her brother's wife, why from her father's court
 Should Cæsar's wife and sister be expelled?
 Does not her loyalty, her father crowned
 A god by death, her chaste virginity,
 Her purity, avail her anything? 285
 We, too, would be forgetful of our prince

After his death, should we desert his child
Because we were afraid of Cæsar's wrath.
Right Roman valor had our ancestors,
Theirs was the very race and blood of Mars, 290
They from the city drove the tyrant kings,
And well avenged thy fate, unhappy maid,
Child of Lucretius, by thine own hand slain
Because by tyrant's lust thou hadst been stained.
Tullia and her husband Tarquin paid 295
The penalty for sins unspeakable—
Over her murdered husband's form she drove
Her cruel chariot, and the furious child
Refused her murdered father's corpse a grave.
This age has also seen a son's base crime, 300
When in the Tuscan seas, on that dread ship,
The emperor drowned his mother treacherously ;
At his command the sailors swiftly left
The quiet harbor, with the sounding oars
The strait reëchoed, and the ship moves on 305
Into deep waters ; there with parted keel
Sinking, it swallowed through its yawning side
The ocean. Great the cry that to the stars
Is borne, and mingled with it is the sound
Of mourning, women beating on their breasts. 310
Grim death was there, each sought from death to flee ;
Some, naked, clung to the wrecked vessel's planks,
And strove to float ; some swimming sought the shore,
The fates drowned many in the ocean's depths.
Augusta rent her clothes and tore her hair, 315
Her face with tears of bitter grief was marred.
When there was left no hope of being saved,
Glowing with anger, conquered by her woes,
' Is this,' she said, ' thy recompense to me,

My son, for all I gave thee? I confess, 320
 Full worthy am I of this sinking keel,
 I brought thee forth, I gave thee light, ah fool!
 I gave an empire and the Cæsar's name!
 O husband, lift thine eyes from Acheron
 And feed upon my punishment, behold, 325
 I who brought death to thee and to thy sons
 Graveless am borne to thee as I deserve,
 Drowned in the waters of the raging sea.'
 While she yet spoke the water smote her face,
 She sank into the sea, then on the wave 330
 She rose again. She strove against the sea,
 Impelled by fear, but wearied sank at last.
 Faith that scorned death remained in silent hearts,
 Many there were who, weakened by the floods,
 Yet dared to bring their drowning mistress aid; 335
 As with weak arms she swam they called to her,
 Lifted her in their arms; but what availed
 That thou wert rescued from the cruel sea?
 By thy son's sword thou wert about to die.
 Scarcely will future ages, slow of faith, 340
 Credit such crime. The monster, conscienceless,
 Rages to see his mother still alive,
 Saved from the sea; and he repeats his crime.
 He speeds her to her death, he cannot brook
 Delay, at his command a soldier hastes, 345
 Who pierces with his sword his mistress' heart.
 Unhappy mother, in her death she prays
 That in her womb the murderer sheathe his sword.
 'This, this,' she cried, 'must with the sword be pierced;
 This which has borne a monster such as he.' 350
 Then with a dying groan she rendered up
 Through the deep wound her sorrow-burdened soul.

ACT II

SCENE I

Seneca.

I was content, why hast thou flattered me,
O potent Fortune, with thy treacherous smiles?
Why hast thou carried me to such a height, 355
That lifted to the palace I might fall
The farther, look upon the greater crimes?
Ah, happier was I when I dwelt afar
From envy's stings, among the rugged cliffs
Of Corsica, where my free spirit knew 360
Leisure for study. Ah, how sweet it was
To look upon the sky, th' alternate change
Of day and night, the circuit of the earth,
The moon, the wandering stars that circle her,
And the far-shining glory of the sky, 365
Which when it has grown old shall fall again
Into the night of chaos—that last day
Has come, which 'neath the ruin of the skies
Shall bury this vile race. A brighter sun,
Newborn, shall bring to life another race, 370
Like that the young world knew, when Saturn ruled
In the high heavens. Then great among the gods
The virgin goddess Justice, with fair Faith,
Sent from the skies, ruled on the tranquil earth
The race of man. The nations knew not war, 375
Nor the *harsh trumpet's* sound, nor clash of arms,

They were not wont about their towns to raise
 Protecting ramparts, every path was free,
 All things were used in common, the glad earth
 Bared willingly for man her fruitful breast, 380
 A happy mother, in her foster-sons'
 Untainted love secure. Another race
 Less peaceful rose, a third in new arts skilled,
 But law-abiding ; then a restless one
 That dared to hunt the wild beasts in the chase, 385
 To catch in nets the fish in stormy seas,
 Or with the fowler's rod beguile the birds,
 Or to the yoke subject the savage bull
 And hold him with the halter, they first turned
 The free earth with the plough ; she, wounded, hid
 Deeper within her sacred breast her fruits ; 391
 But even to the heart of Mother Earth
 A more degenerate generation pressed,
 Brought gold and iron thence, and by-and-by
 Armed their fierce hands with weapons ; cities rose,
 Their own they kept from danger with the sword. 395
 The virgin goddess Justice was despised
 And fled from earth, from men of cruel ways,
 From hands by blood polluted, to the skies.
 Longing for war and avarice for gold 400
 Grew through the world, and luxury arose,
 Greatest of ills, a flattering, noisome thing,
 To which through man's delusion time gave strength.
 The garnered vices of so many years
 Abound in us, we live in a base age 405
 When crime is regnant, when wild lawlessness
 Reigns and imperious passion owns the sway
 Of shameless lust ; the victress luxury
 Plundered long since the riches of the world

That she might in a moment squander them. 410
 But see, where Nero comes with hasty steps,
 What will he do ?

SCENE II

Seneca, Nero, Prefect of the Palace.

Nero. Go, do my bidding; send a man to slay
 Plautus and Sulla, let him bring their heads.

Prefect. There shall be no delay, I go at once. 415

Seneca. It is not right to causelessly destroy
 Thy kindred.

Nero. He whose heart is free from fear
 May easily be just.

Seneca. Yet clemency
 Is a most potent remedy for fear.

Nero. A leader's highest virtue is to slay 420
 His foe.

Seneca. The father of his country finds
 A greater in the service of the state.

Nero. 'Tis meet for boys to govern weak old age.

Seneca. 'Tis rather needful ardent youth be ruled.

Nero. I'm old enough, I think, to rule myself. 425

Seneca. I pray the gods approve whate'er thou
 dost.

Nero. I were a fool to reverence the gods,
 Myself am made a god.

Seneca. Fear thou the more
 Because thy power is great.

Nero. My fortune gives
 To me in all things freedom absolute. 430

Seneca. Fortune's a fickle goddess, trust her not.

Nero. Unskilled are they who know not their own power.

Seneca. He who does right is worthy to be feared,
Not he who does what'er his will may prompt.

Nero. The people scorn the feeble.

Seneca. They destroy 435
One whom they hate.

Nero. The sword protects the prince.

Seneca. Good faith protects him better.

Nero. They must fear.

Seneca. Man finds oppressive what is forced on him.

Nero. They shall obey my will.

Seneca. Rule justly then.

Nero. Myself shall be the judge.

Seneca. The people's voice 440
Must ratify thy will.

Nero. The sword thou scornest
Shall force them to it.

Seneca. God forbid that crime.

Nero. And shall I longer suffer them to seek
My death, that I, despised and unavenged,
May suddenly be slain? Removed far hence, 445
Sulla and Plautus have not been subdued
By exile, with persistent rage they arm
Their agents for my murder; still they find,
Though absent, many followers in the town,
This nourishes the exile's hopes. The sword 450
Shall overthrow suspected enemies.

My hated wife shall die, with her shall go
The brother whom she loves, the proud shall fall.

Seneca. To shine among the great is beautiful,
To keep one's hands from blood, be slow to wrath, 455

Give the world rest, his generation peace,
 This is the height of virtue, by this path
 May heaven be attained ; this is the way
 The first Augustus, father of the land,
 Gained 'mid the stars a place and as a god 460
 Is worshipped now in temples. Yet for long
 Fate tossed him here and there by land and sea,
 Through all war's changing fortunes, till he slew
 His father's foes. The goddess suffered thee
 To take his scepter without shedding blood, 465
 Subjected land and ocean to thy nod ;
 Envy was conquered and to loyalty
 Gave place ; the senate's favor and the knights'
 Was thine, by senators' and people's will
 Thou wert elected arbiter of peace, 470
 Judge of the human race ; thou rulest now
 The world in sacred majesty, art called,
 In turn, the father of the fatherland.
 Rome asks that thou deserve the name she gives,
 And to thy care commends her citizens. 475

Nero. I thank the gods, Rome and her senate do
 My bidding, and reluctant lips are forced
 By fear of me to utter humble prayers.
 Were it not madness that those citizens
 Who swell with pride in their illustrious race, 480
 Who are a menace to the king and state,
 Should live, when with a word I might command
 That those whom I suspect be put to death ?
 A Brutus armed himself to slay the prince
 To whom he owed his safety ; Cæsar's self, 485
 In war invincible, the nation's lord,
 By highest honors equal made with Jove,
 Died by the murderous hand of citizens.

Then Rome, so often rent with civil war,
 Saw her sons' blood poured forth abundantly. 490
 How many nobles, youths, or aged men,
 Driven about the world in fear of death,
 Fleeing from home and the triumvir's sword,
 Their names inscribed upon the fatal list
 That to grim death delivered them, were slain 495
 By great Augustus, who deserved the skies
 For good and glorious deeds? The senators
 In sorrow saw the heads of many slain
 Exposed upon the rostrum, nor might weep
 Their dead, nor groan to see the forum stained 500
 With foul corruption, noble blood distilled
 From putrid faces. Nor was this the end
 Of blood and slaughter, Philippi long feared
 In misery wild beasts and birds of prey,
 Sicilian waters swallowed up her fleet 505
 And oft-revolting citizens, the world
 Was shaken by the mighty leader's strength.
 Conquered in war, shortly about to die,
 He sought the Nile in ships prepared for flight,
 A Roman leader's blood again was drunk 510
 By Egypt the incestuous, now he dwells
 Among the dead. Then impious civil war,
 Long waged, at last was ended and at length
 The wearied victor might lay by his sword
 Blunted by savage warfare. He maintained 515
 His throne by fear and in the loyalty
 And weapons of his soldiers was secure.
 He by the duteous action of his son
 Was made a god, was revered after death,
 Was honored in the temples. Other stars 520
 Remain for us if with relentless sword

We first destroy whate'er would do us harm,
And found our house on children worthy us.

Seneca. A woman of celestial lineage,
The ornament of honored Claudius' race, 525
Chosen, like Juno, for her brother's wife,
With godlike sons will fill thy palace halls.

Nero. The mother's incest takes away my faith
In true-born sons. Her heart was never mine.

Seneca. Love does not show its radiance in youth,
Then it conceals its flame in modesty. 531

Nero. Indeed, I vainly long believed this true ;
Although her hate of me was evident
In her unfriendly mien and countenance,
I judged at last the smart must be avenged. 535
I found a woman meet to be my wife
By birth and beauty, to whose loveliness
Venus, Jove's wife, the war-fierce goddess, bowed.

Seneca. The probity and honor of a wife,
Her modesty and gentleness should charm 540
Her husband ; graces of the mind and soul
Alone abide forever, beauty's flower
A single day destroys.

Nero. Ah, every grace
God has united in a single form,
And fate has caused her to be born for me. 545

Seneca. Oh, banish from thy heart the god of love,
And put not foolishly thy trust in him.

Nero. Him whom the wielder of the thunderbolt
May not compel, the tyrant of the skies,
Who penetrates the seas and Pluto's realm, 550
And draws the gods from heaven ?

Seneca. Man's error paints
The cruel god of love as winged, and arms

His hand with bow and arrow, gives a torch,
 Believes him Venus' son and Vulcan's seed.
 Love is but passion's force within the soul, 555
 A pleasing heat, 'tis born of youth and fed
 By ease and luxury when fortune smiles.
 Cease thou to feed and cherish it, it fails,
 Loses its strength and dies.

Nero. This I believe
 The greatest source of life, from this springs joy; 560
 The human race will never be extinct,
 'Tis ever generated by sweet love,
 Love soothes the hearts of savage beasts. The god
 Shall bear for me the marriage torch, his fire
 Shall join Poppæa to me as my wife. 565

Seneca. This marriage scarcely will the people
 brook,

And holy Justice scarce will sanction it.

Nero. Am I alone forbid what all may do?

Seneca. More is demanded of the powerful. 569

Nero. Whether my passion or the people's will
 Shall yield, I yet will prove.

Seneca. Nay, mildly please
 Thy citizens.

Nero. A state is governed ill
 When by the mob its ruler can be ruled.

Seneca. When with the prince its prayers have no
 avail,

Surely the state has reason to complain. 575

Nero. May one compel when prayers are no avail?

Seneca. 'Tis cruel to refuse.

Nero. 'Tis criminal

To force a prince.

Seneca. Let himself grant their wish.

Nero. But rumor would report him overcome.

Seneca. Rumor is but a vain and empty thing. 580

Nero. Perhaps, but it brands many.

Seneca. Yet it fears

The throne.

Nero. Yet none the less reproaches it.

Seneca. 'Tis easily suppressed. Let thy wife's
youth,

Her modesty and truth, her father's gifts,
Prevail upon thee.

Nero. Cease to harass me, 585

Thou urgest me too much, I well may do
What Seneca condemns. The people's will
Already long ago I put aside,
She carries in her womb my pledge of love,
Why not to-morrow take her for my bride? 590

ACT III

SCENE I

The Ghost of Agrippina.

Through the rent earth from Tartarus I come,
In my right hand I bear a Stygian torch
For that vile bridal, with such gloomy fires
As an avenging mother's hand prepares
For the sad altars, shall Poppæa wed 595
My son. The memory of that murder dwells,
Even among the shades, within my heart.
Still it is unavenged, the dread reward
For all my favors was the rotten keel, 599
That night on which I mourned the vessel's wreck
My payment for a throne! I would have wept
The murder of my friends, my base son's crimes—
There was not time for tears, but crime on crime
He heaped, and smitten by the sword, made foul
By many wounds, my troubled life went out 603
Upon the sacred altars of the home ;
Saved from the deep, my blood was not enough
To quench the hatred of my son, he wars,
The cruel tyrant, 'gainst the very name
Of mother, seeks to overthrow my fame. 610
All the inscriptions and the statues raised
In honor of his mother he destroys
Through all the world, the world my hapless love
Gave, for my own destruction, to a boy

To rule. In death my murdered husband's soul 615
 Pursues me, presses in my hated face
 The torch, he threatens, he attacks, imputes
 His fate to me and murder to his son,
 Demands the author of his violent death.
 Ah, spare, revenge is thine! I do not ask 620
 For long; th' avenging goddess has prepared
 Death worthy of the tyrant, coward flight,
 Lashes, and penalties that shall surpass
 The thirst of Tantalus, the heavy toil
 Of Sisyphus, the bird of Tityus, 625
 The flying wheel that tears Ixion's limbs.
 What though he build his costly palaces
 Of marble, overlays them with pure gold?
 Though cohorts watch the armored chieftain's gates,
 Though the world be impoverished to send 630
 Its wealth to him, though suppliant Parthians kneel
 And kiss his cruel hand, though kingdoms give
 Their riches, yet the day shall surely come
 When for his crimes he will be called to give
 His guilty soul; when, banished and forlorn, 635
 In need of all things, he shall give his foes
 His life-blood. What availed my prayers and toils?
 Whither has thine own madness and the fates
 Borne thee, my son, that even thy mother's wrath,
 Though by thy crime she died, should faint and fail
 Before such evils? Would the beasts of prey 641
 Had torn my vitals ere I brought thee forth
 A little child into the light of day
 And nourished thee; still innocent and mine,
 Sinless and passionless thou then hadst died 645
 Clinging to me; thou hadst obtained a place
 Of everlasting peace among the shades,

Among thy father's fathers, mighty men,
 Who now must feel perpetual grief and shame
 Because of thee, base one. I too must mourn, 650
 Who bore so vile a son. I who have brought,
 As stepdame, wife, and mother, to my own
 Naught but misfortune—wherefore should I cease
 To hide my head in gloomy Tartarus?

SCENE II

Octavia, Chorus.

Octavia. Oh, spare your tears upon this festal day,
 Let not such love and kindness toward us 656
 Arouse the bitter anger of the king,
 Let me not be a cause of woe to you.
 Not for the first time do I feel the wounds,
 More grievous have I borne. This day shall bring
 The end of all my cares, mayhap my death. 661
 I will not see my cruel husband's face,
 The hated marriage chamber of a slave
 I will not enter, I will be henceforth
 The sister of Augustus, not his wife. 665
 Let bitter pain and haunting fear of death
 Depart. Ah, fool! Remembering his crimes,
 Canst thou still hope for this? Too long preserved,
 A victim to this bridal thou shalt fall.
 But why perplexed and with wet cheeks look back
 So often on thy home? Haste from its roof, 671
 Forsake the blood-stained palace of the king.

Chorus. The day long feared, long talked of, breaks
 at last,
 When driven forth by Nero, Claudius' child

Forsakes her marriage chamber, even now 677
Victorious Poppæa there abides.
Our love falls off, our wrath is crushed by fear
And fruitless ; where is now the Roman power
Which oft subdued great kings and gave just laws
To an unconquered land ? With honors crowned,
The worthy citizens made peace and war, 681
Ruled barbarous nations, and imprisoned kings.
Lo, on all sides, before our saddened eyes
The image of Poppæa stands supreme,
With Nero's joined. Oh, cast it to the ground 685
With violent hands, too like herself it is ;
And drag her from the chamber of the king,
Seek with destroying flame and cruel spears
The prince's palace.

ACT IV

SCENE I

Poppæa, Nursc.

Nursc. O foster child, why fleest thou in fear 690
Thy husband's marriage chamber? Wherefore seek
With troubled look a solitary place?
Why wet thy cheeks with tears? The day long sought
With prayers and sacrifice now shines for us;
Thou to thy Cæsar, whom thy beauty won, 695
Hast been united by the marriage bond.
Venus, Love's mother, mightiest of the gods,
Whom Seneca despised, has given him,
Captived, to thee. Dwelling within the court
How lovely wast thou on the princely couch. 700
The senate saw, amazed, thy loveliness,
When thou didst offer incense to the gods
And sprinkle on their altars holy wine;
Veiled wert thou with the filmy wedding veil,
Flame colored. Close beside thee walked the king,
Triumphant 'mid the people's favoring shouts, 706
In his proud face and carriage shone his joy.
So Peleas once took Thetis for his bride,
When from the foamy waters of the sea
She sprang; 'tis said the heavenly deities 710
And every ocean god with one consent
Honored their bridal. What has changed thy face
So suddenly? Why is it now so pale?

Tell me what mean these tears.

Poppæa. Ah, nurse, my mind
 Is darkened, troubled, and my senses fail 715
 From fear of last night's visions terrible.
 For when the happy day had left the sky
 To darkness and the stars, I fell asleep
 Encompassed by my Nero's loving arms ;
 But not for long might I enjoy sweet sleep. 720
 It seemed as though a mourning company
 Came to my marriage chamber ; with loose hair
 Rome's mothers, weeping, beat upon their breasts,
 With dreadful oft-repeated trumpet notes ;
 The mother of my husband, with harsh threats, 725
 Waved wildly in my face a blood-red torch ;
 When forced, by urgent fear, I followed her,
 Earth yawned and suddenly a mighty gulf
 Was opened for me whither I was plunged
 Headlong, and there in wonder I beheld 730
 My marriage-bed, in which I lay me down
 Sore wearied. With a throng of followers, then,
 I saw my former husband and my son
 Coming. Crispinus, parted from me long,
 Hastened to kiss me, take me in his arms, 735
 When Nero madly rushed into my home
 And buried in that breast the cruel sword.
 At length my terror roused me from my sleep,
 A fearful trembling shook my very bones, 739
 My heart throbb'd, and my voice was choked by fear ;
 Thy love and loyalty have strengthened me.
 Alas, what threat these spirits of the dead ?
 Why have I seen my husband's blood poured forth ?
Nurse. Whatever trouble stirs the waking soul,
 A swift, mysterious power of the mind 745

Recalls in sleep. What need to wonder then,
 That circled by the arms of thy new mate
 Thou sawest in a dream thy marriage-bed,
 Thy husband? Did it trouble thee to see
 Loose hair, breasts beaten on a festal day? 750
 Within her father's and her brother's house
 They mourn Octavia's divorce; that torch
 Which thou didst follow, which the empress' hand
 Upheld, was omen of the noble name
 That hatred gained for thee; thy rest in hell 755
 Promised thy marriage bond should be for ay,
 That in his breast thy emperor plunged the sword
 Presages that he will not stir up wars,
 But sheath his sword in peace. Be calm again,
 Be glad, I pray thee, put aside thy fear, 760
 Go to thy marriage chamber.

Poppæa. I will seek
 The shrines and holy altars, offer there
 The blood of victims slain unto the gods,
 That all the ills that night and slumber threat
 May be averted, and the things I dread 765
 Be turned against my foe. Do thou adore
 With pious prayers the gods, and offer up
 Thy supplications for me, that my joy
 May be abiding.

SCENE II

Chorus.

If prating rumor's tales may be believed 770
 Of all the amorous intrigues of Jove,
 How, feathered like the swan, in his embrace

He held fair Leda, or, like fierce bull formed,
 Bore on his back Europa through the waves,
 He would desert the star where now he rules 775
 To seek thy arms, Poppæa, whom indeed
 He might prefer to Leda or to thee
 Danae, who in wonder saw him once
 Come in a golden rain. Let Sparta boast
 Her daughter's beauty, Phrygia's shepherd joy 780
 In his reward—she is more fair of face
 Than child of Tyndarus who caused grim war
 And whelmed the Phrygian kingdom in the dust.
 But who is this who comes with troubled steps.
 What message does his heaving bosom bear? 785

SCENE III

Messenger, Chorus.

Messenger. The guard who watches at the emperor's
gates

Must now defend his courts, the populace
 Is roused against him. See, the prefects bring
 In haste their cohorts to defend the town.
 The people's fury, causelessly conceived, 790
 Is not displaced by fear, but grows in strength.

Chorus. What is the fury that disturbs their minds?

Messenger. Filled with affection for Octavia,
And by great wrongs enraged, the crowd rush on.

Chorus. What have they dared to do and to what
end? 795

Messenger. They would give back again to Claudius'
child

Her father's palace and the right she holds

As wedded to her brother, her due share
Of royal power.

Chorus. These Poppæa holds.

Messenger. This too great love has set their hearts
on fire 800

And drawn them headlong into maddest deeds.
The images of marble and of brass
That have Poppæa's face lie overthrown
And broken by the mob's fierce hands and swords.
They drag the broken parts about with ropes, 805
And trample in the mire the shattered limbs.
Wild words and deeds are mingled, which my fear
Forbids my lips to speak. Now they prepare
To gird with flames the palace of the king,
Unless he yield to them his new made wife, 810
Restore to Claudius' child her former home.
That he himself may know of this revolt,
I have not tarried, but fulfilled in haste
The Prefect's bidding.

Chorus. Wherefore have you stirred
In vain this cruel war? Invincible 815
Are Cupid's darts. He will o'erwhelm your fires
With the same flame wherewith he oft has quenched
The thunderbolts and carried Jove himself
A captive from the sky. You with your blood
Will pay the penalty, not patient he, 820
Nor easy to be ruled, when once rage-filled.
At his command Achilles smote the lyre,
He quelled the Greeks, he quelled Atrides, too,
And threw the realm of Priam in the dust,
Laid cities low; for what the ruthless god 825
With his wild might may do, my spirit fails.

ACT V

SCENE I

Nero.

Too slow my soldiers' hands, too mild my wrath,
 In view of crime like this. The people's blood
 Should have put out the fires they light for me,
 And Rome which bore such sons been made to reek
 With slaughter of her citizens. Ah well, 831
 The punishment of death is all too small,
 Their lawless deeds deserve worse punishment ;
 But she for whom the angry citizens
 Arose against me, my suspected wife 835
 And sister, shall for their offence give up
 Her life, shall quench my anger with her blood.
 The city shall be wasted by my fires,
 The guilty citizens shall be harassed
 By flames, and ruin, and hard poverty, 840
 Hunger, and bitter grief. The senseless mob,
 Corrupted by the blessings of my reign,
 Run riot, nor, ungrateful, comprehend
 My clemency ; they cannot be at peace,
 But, restless, rash, and overconfident, 845
 They rush to their own ruin. By hard means
 They must be ruled, and by a heavy yoke
 Subdued, that they may never dare like deeds,
 Nor to my wife's fair face dare lift their eyes.
 By heavy vengeance humbled, they shall learn 850

Through fear to give obedience to my nod.
 But he whose singular integrity
 And well-known loyalty have made him chief
 Of all my army comes.

SCENE II

Nero, Prefect.

Prefect. I come to say the fury of the mob 855
 Is checked by slaughter of the few who long
 Resisted foolishly.

Nero. Is this enough?
 Hast thou, a soldier, thus obeyed thy chief?
 They have been checked? Is this the penalty
 They owe me?

Prefect. By the sword the leaders fell. 860

Nero. Why are the rabble spared who dared
 attack

My home with fiery brands, who dared prescribe
 A law unto their king, who from our couch
 Dragged forth my lovely wife and with vile hands
 And threatening words abused her? Shall not they
 Endure just punishment?

Prefect. Shall wrath prescribe 866
 The penalty thy citizens shall pay?

Nero. It shall prescribe a penalty whose fame
 Shall never perish in the years to come.

Prefect. Neither thy anger nor our fear should rule.

Nero. She shall atone who first aroused our
 wrath. 871

Prefect. Whom does thy vengeance seek? Spare
 not my hands.

Nero. The murder of my sister, her vile life.

Prefect. Such rigor with cold horror chills my soul.

Nero. Art loth to do my will?

Prefect. Why doubt my truth? 875

Nero. Because thou didst not slay mine enemy.

Prefect. And can a woman be thine enemy?

Nero. When she is capable of crimes like hers.

Prefect. What proves her guilt?

Nero. The madness of the mob.

Prefect. Who shall restrain them?

Nero. She who stirred them up. 880

Prefect. Scarce any one, I think.

Nero. A woman can,

To whom was giv'n a spirit prone to ill,

A bosom filled with wiles for harming us.

Prefect. She has no power.

Nero. That not impregnable

She be, that wavering strength be crushed by fear, 885

By punishment that even now too late

Falls upon one too long at liberty,

To harm us, leave thy counsels and thy prayers,

Go do our bidding. Let her in a ship

Be carried to some distant shore to die,

890

That I at last may banish anxious fear.

SCENE III

Chorus.

How dangerous is popular applause,

How terrible! With favoring breath it fills

The vessel's sails and carries it along,

Then in the deep and raging seas grows faint

895

And leaves it. The sad mother wept her sons,

The Gracchi, of distinguished family born,
 Illustrious for piety and truth
 And eloquence, brave hearted, to the laws
 Attentive, whom the people's too great love 900
 Destroyed. Such violent death was, too, thy fate,
 O Drusus, not thy honors nor thy home
 Protected thee—how many instances
 Our present grief forbids us to recall!
 The citizens may see her dragged to death 905
 And torture, weeping, sad, to whom they sought
 To give again her royal dwelling-place,
 Her fortune in her brother's marriage-bed.
 Well may the poor, beneath an humble roof,
 Be happy, for the tempest often shakes 910
 And Fortune oft o'erthrows proud palaces.

SCENE IV

Octavia, Chorus.

Octavia. Where do you drag me? If I still may live,
 Broken and humbled by my many ills,
 What exile does the tyrant or his queen
 Command? If he would crown my woes with death 915
 Why does he harshly grudge that I should die
 In my own land? Alas, there is no hope
 Of safety, for I see my brother's ship,
 Lo, in this vessel I shall be borne hence,
 I, once his wife, now driven from his bed, 920
 His wretched sister. No divinity
 Protects the good from harm, there are no gods,
 The sad Erinnyes rule the universe.
 Who worthily may weep my misery?
 With what lament can the sad nightingale 925

Answer my tears? Ah, would the fates might give
 Her wings to wretched me! Then borne aloft
 Upon bird pinions, I would flee afar
 From sorrow, from the company of men,
 From slaughter; in a solitary wood, 930
 Sitting alone upon a slender twig,
 I could pour forth my sorrowful lament
 With querulous voice.

Chorus. Mankind is ruled by fate,
 And none may trust that his will be unchanged;
 We need to fear each day that brings to us 935
 Its varying fortunes. Strengthen then thy soul
 With memory of the many instances
 Thy house has seen. Ah, why should Fortune be
 More harsh to thee? Thee first I must recall,
 Child of Agrippa, by thy marriage made 940
 The daughter of Augustus, Cæsar's wife;
 Thy name shone glorious over all the world,
 Oft from thy fruitful womb thou broughtest forth
 Pledges of peace, but soon thou sufferedst
 Exile, the lash and chains, bereavement, grief, 945
 And death at length with torture long endured.
 Livia, wife of Drusus, in her sons
 And husband fortunate, fell into crime,
 She met her punishment.
 Julia was followed by her mother's fate, 950
 And though no crime was hers, was slain at last.
 What power wielded not thy mother once?
 She ruled within the palace of the king,
 Was rich in sons and to her husband dear,
 Yet, humbled by her handmaid, she was slain 955
 By the fierce warrior's sword. What throne in
 heaven

Might Nero's noble mother not expect?
 Yet she by sailors rude was first abused,
 Then, wounded by the sword, she fell at length
 A victim to her cruel son.

Octavia. Behold, 960
 Me also does the cruel tyrant send
 To the dead spirits and the land of shades.
 Why vainly linger in my misery?
 Ye to whom fortune gave the power to slay,
 Speed now my death. I call upon the gods— 965
 Ah, fool, what wouldst thou? Cease to make thy
 prayers

To gods who hate thee. Tartarus, I call
 Thee as my witness, and the goddesses
 Of Erebus, avengers of all crimes,
 And thee, my father 970

I do not dread this death. Prepare the ship,
 Spread to the winds the sails, the lonely shores
 Of Pandataria shall the pilot seek.

SCENE V

Chorus.

Ye gentle zephyrs and soft breathing airs
 That once from harsh Diana's altars bore 975
 Iphigenia, hidden in a cloud,
 Her also bear from such keen suffering,
 To Hecate's temple carry her, I pray;
 Milder is Aulis and the barbarous land
 Of Taurus than this city, to the gods 980
 The blood of strangers there is sacrificed,
 In her own children's blood Rome takes delight.

THE END.

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